

# THE DRAMA IN ADULT EDUCATION

*A Report by the Adult Education  
Committee of the Board of Education,  
being Paper No. 6 of the Committee.*



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The following were members at the time of the preparation of this Report :—

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*Note by the Board of Education.*

The Board believe that the publication of this Report will be welcomed by all persons and bodies interested in Adult Education. The investigations of the Committee cover a wide field and the Board will welcome discussion of the numerous and very interesting suggestions put forward in the Report.

It will be understood of course that the Board are not committed to approval of the findings of the Report upon particular issues or of the opinions expressed in evidence.

The expenses incurred in the preparation of this Paper are estimated at 160*l.* 14*s.* 8*d.*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS.

## A. INTRODUCTION.

### I RELATION OF THE DRAMA AND ADULT EDUCATION.

Paragraphs.

1- 9

### II. NATURE OF THE DRAMATIC ART.

10- 19

### III. HISTORY OF THE DRAMATIC ART.

20 Sources of History.

21- 24 Folk Drama in England.

25- 29 Drama under the auspices of the Church.

30- 35 The Elizabethan Period.

36- 50 1642-1900.

## B. SURVEY OF THE PRESENT POSITION.

### IV. THE PROFESSIONAL THEATRE.

51- 60 Limitations of Enquiry.

61- 68 "Repertory" Theatres.

69- 71 Playgoers' Societies.

72- 82 "The Old Vic."

83- 92 The Lena Ashwell Players.

93- 99 Conclusions in regard to "Repertory" Theatres.

99-106 The Arts League of Service.

### V. THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE.

107-112

### VI. AMATEUR SOCIETIES IN THE TOWNS.

113-114 Limitations of Enquiry.

115-118 London.

119-139 Yorkshire.

140-146 Lancashire and Cheshire.

147-154 The Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich.

155-163 Conclusions as to "Little Theatres."

164-171 Citizen House, Bath.

### VII. THE DRAMA IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

172-185 Educational Settlements.

186-202 Residential Settlements.

203-208 National Adult School Union.

209 The Y.M.C.A.

210-220 The Workers' Educational Association.

221-226 The University Extension Movement

227-244 Local Education Authorities.

245-247 Conclusions in regard to Local Education Authorities.

248 Schools.

249-261 The Universities.

## VIII. OTHER AMATEUR SOCIETIES.

- 262-263 A Prison Experiment.  
 264 Boys' Clubs.  
 265-276 Works and Offices.

## IX. DRAMA AND THE CHURCHES.

277-297

## X. THE DRAMA IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

- 298 Popular Character  
 299-303 Glastonbury  
 304-311 The Hardy Players  
 312-320 Welsh Drama and the Portmadoc Players.  
 321-329 The Stoneland Players  
 330-335 The Shoreham Village Players.  
 336-338 Other Village Societies  
 339-346 The Village Drama Society.  
 347-348 The National Federation of Women's Institutes.

## C CRITICISM

## XI DRAMA AS AN INSTRUMENT OF EDUCATION.

- 349-352 Wide Appeal.  
 353-376 Choice of Plays.  
 377-382 The Art of Acting  
 383-399 The Development of Imaginative Sympathy.  
 400-404 Speech and Movement  
 405-424 Folk Dancing  
 425-426 Craftsmanship.

## XII A CO-OPERATIVE ENTERPRISE.

427-432

## XIII DIFFICULTIES OF AMATEUR SOCIETIES.

433-437

## XIV TEACHERS AND PRODUCERS.

- 438-448 The Training of Producers.  
 449-451 The Work of the Producer.

## XV. SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATIONS.

452-459

## XVI. A NATIONAL THEATRE.

460-471

## XVII. CONCLUSION.

472-474

## PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

## LIST OF WITNESSES.

## INDEX.

# REPORT ON THE DRAMA IN ADULT EDUCATION.

## A.—INTRODUCTION.

### I.—RELATION OF THE DRAMA AND ADULT EDUCATION.

1. A remarkable feature of the social history of the years following the War has been the widespread development of that form of popular culture which has, perhaps unhappily, been given the title of Adult Education.

2. This development has taken place at a time when the economic position of a considerable part of the population has definitely declined. This coincidence may not be a matter for surprise; religious and educational movements do not always synchronize with increased material prosperity. They are more commonly due to the enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of a few devoted men and women, and Adult Education to-day owes its inspiration to the enthusiasm of organisers and teachers connected with the University and other bodies which are concerned to promote courses of study in the subjects of a liberal education. A marked feature of the new movement is a tendency to a wider range of interest. Courses in English Literature show a remarkable increase both in number and in proportion; at the same time musical and dramatic activities are constantly to be found in the programmes of adult education centres. The growth of popular interest in music, and in particular in choral singing, led us two years ago to prepare a report on the place of music in Adult Education. Subsequently the growing interest in the drama on the part of educational bodies and the widespread existence of societies engaged in the production of plays of high quality was brought to our notice, and we have devoted a substantial part of the intervening period to a survey of this new movement, and



to an attempt to assess its educational value, which now form the subject of this report on the place of drama in Adult Education.

3. We have said that the new movement in popular culture is perhaps unhappy in its title of Adult Education. Undoubtedly the word "Education" is apt to repel the ordinary man, owing to its association with the atmosphere of the class room, and the relation of teacher and taught. Adult Education has little trace of the latter and none of the former. The teacher in Adult Education commonly prefers to be known by some other title denoting a relation to his class of guidance rather than instruction. But it cannot be denied that instruments of popular culture such as the Library, Music and the Drama, have one great preliminary advantage over all other forms of Adult Education, in that they carry in the popular mind, and in common phraseology, no association with the atmosphere of the class room.

4. We have mentioned that the widespread growth of societies producing dramatic works of high quality first suggested to us an enquiry into the place of drama in Adult Education. At a later stage in the report we propose to give a brief survey of some of these societies, and an outline of their special characteristics.

5. At this stage however it will be of interest to note that there are more than 700 societies affiliated to the British Drama League. The National Operatic and Dramatic Association has more than 700 affiliated societies and is a very active body; a large proportion of these however are engaged in the production of light opera and musical comedy, which fall outside the limits of this report. The Village Drama Society has more than 150 branches, while social and educational associations, such as the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the National Adult School Union and the Y.M.C.A. in their various centres and the Educational and Residential Settlements number some hundreds of dramatic groups. The Catholic Play Society is in touch

with a large number of groups producing religious plays in Churches. The Independent Labour Party is active in promoting the drama and has nearly a hundred dramatic groups. A small town, Welwyn Garden City, with a population of less than 5,000, has four societies. The mere extent of the movement is however of far less interest than its character. Our first witness, Mr Harley Granville-Barker, was emphatic on this point. "The fact," he said, "that an increasing number of grown-up people find distraction for the winter evenings in amateur theatricals would be little more worth worrying about than the prevalence of Bridge or Mah-Jongg. But the striking thing about the present revival of interest in drama—as apart from interest in the professional theatre—is the liking of plays for their own sake and therefore, more often than not, the liking of good plays. I suspect that the amateur clubs of my youth still go on, and perform out-of-date West-End successes, in which feeble imitations are given of the popular favourites who first played in them. But the strength of the movement lies in a variety of organisations of very recent origin, quite unrelated to these in their purpose or the taste they show. I do not think they pay very much regard to the fashions in professional drama either. I believe—though it may be because I wish to believe—that here is a genuine artistic up-growth and an endeavour not merely after self-expression, but after the far more complex co-operative expression that drama provides. Here in fact is a genuine and creative interest in a highly organic art."

6. The growth of amateur societies has been accompanied by an increase in the number of "repertory" theatres and other associations which, in that the actors are professionals, resemble the commercial theatre, but being organised without regard for profit are able to give more consideration to the artistic and educational merits of a play than to the qualities likely to contribute to a long run. Prominent among these are the "Old Vic" with its great record of opera and Shakespeare productions, the Lena Ashwell Players, the Arts League of Service and the Repertory Theatres at

Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool and elsewhere. Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, Hon. Secretary of the British Drama League in his evidence before us attributed the growth of the new movement in a great degree to the Repertory Companies organised by Miss Lena Ashwell during the War in France and afterwards in London.

7. Side by side with the growing activity in the production of plays there has been an increasing appreciation of the importance of drama as an instrument of education. The Eighth Annual Conference on New Ideals in Education at Stratford-on-Avon in April, 1922 was devoted to the consideration of the Drama in Education. Addresses on the drama were given by distinguished playwrights and representatives of the stage, and a number of teachers gave accounts of their experience of dramatic work in schools. The Oxford University Extension Lectures Committee took the Drama, Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern as the subject for the Summer Meeting of three weeks in 1925, and arranged for the presentation of representative plays by the Oxford Players and an Exhibition of Repertory and Community Theatre Art by the British Drama League. Moreover the Press devotes increasing attention to the work of amateur societies. Mr. Lennox Robinson has contributed a number of articles to the "Observer" on their work in the North of England, while a Manchester paper devotes two columns each week to the amateur societies of Lancashire.

8. Before discussing any further the nature of this dramatic revival, we are bound to consider two questions, the nature of drama as a form of art, and the historical background of the dramatic art more especially in England and Wales.

9. The first question arises because some people are still disposed to regard the dramatic art as pernicious and beset with dangers to the moral character, while others are disposed to regard it as having no intellectual content and justifiable only as a form of diversion for a tired mind. We may say at once that the former point of view, once a

very genuine conviction of certain religious bodies, appears almost to have disappeared. We could wish that the latter point of view had suffered the same eclipse. The second question deserves consideration, because the history of the drama may throw some light on the conditions under which it has reached its highest development. Moreover, no form of artistic expression can be more than ephemeral in character if it is not deep rooted in the instincts of the people. If the history of the drama in this country demonstrated that the people had shown neither any pleasure in, nor aptitude for, this form of expression, there would be little prospect that the present dramatic revival would make any permanent impression on our national life.

## II.—NATURE OF THE DRAMATIC ART.

10. We obtained from a number of our witnesses a variety of most interesting views on the nature of drama as a form of art. Their interest is such that we make no apology for quoting at some length the views expressed.

11. Sir Barry Jackson of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre writes :—" The drama is a vital form of art which follows human civilisation in every form, from the most highly civilised races to those of the lowest known intelligence. It is apparent in earliest childhood in the aptitude for pretence and use of symbolism. The history of the drama in England takes its origin from the representation of sacred dramas illustrating the truths of the Bible, and, as in most countries, this particular form is almost immediately cast aside for representations of existing conditions from a very wide angle of view. The main idea invariably underlying the progress of the drama through the ages is a vivid representation of ideal life. It teaches humanity quite directly to what it should aspire and what it should cast aside as base and worthless. Drama cannot be called a pure art: it is of composite form gathering together to one end poet, painter, musician and dancer. Of all arts it is the most immediately vital in that it depends on the association for a few hours of a great number of people whose mental energies are all concentrated in the same direction. As an instrument of education drama, always supposing that education means a knowledge of leading a life best calculated to help the community, stands alone without rival. It shows every phase of life. It brings the whole of man's life into the compass of two and a half hours ; it throws a light on the fundamentals of life through mimic action ; it shows the infinite significance of small actions on human affairs and thus enables a man to weigh up his actions and to sort out his moral ideas."

12. Miss Marjorie West makes a higher claim. " As art " she writes " the drama should stand supreme. It is

capable, as no other art is, of combining every form of artistic expression into one perfect whole. Architecture, sculpture and painting, music and diction, poetry and prose, gesture and dancing, all are ready to find their places in the drama and to combine in its production. Under all great art must lie a deep and serious philosophy of life, but this is pre-eminently true of great drama. Both the Greeks, its creators, and the mediaeval Church, its rediscoverer, used the drama as the highest vehicle for the conveyance of moral and religious truths. In recognition of its pre-eminence, some of the most sublime poets of mankind have used the drama as the chosen means for the expression of their art."

13. Miss Constance Smedley makes much the same claim with regard to the comprehensive character of drama as an art form. "Great drama" she writes "has flourished when it is the embodiment of the ideals of the people; when it has been seriously regarded by the State, and used as a means of promoting the highest standards of ethics and wisdom. As a form of art, drama includes all the arts; the fundamental laws of all arts must be understood and practised, the laws of rhythmic movement, sound, and vision, of structural design, composition, pattern and colour."

14. Professor Allardyce Nicoll makes a comparison between the drama on the one hand and the novel and poetry on the other, and finds the former the wider and more profound. "As a form of art," he says "the drama seems to me to be of the highest, if not the highest itself. In the drama there is to be found a union of the arts, so that the appeal is wider and more profound than is that of the novel or of poetry. Moreover, the insight into human nature is more varied than in poetry, and the restricted form of drama necessitates a more poignant and a more concentrated expression of purpose than is to be discovered in the novel. The novel tends constantly to dissipate its force because of its length; poetry normally is

mono-emotional. In the drama we have not only the ever-present general impression, as for example in Shakespeare's plays, but the various shades of thought and of feeling presented in each one of the characters and wrought together into a harmonious whole. Because of its restricted length and because of the fact that the dramatist is forbidden to speak *in propria persona*, the drama is the subtlest of literary media. The playwright has to suggest rather than to enunciate openly. The study of the drama, therefore, is more calculated than any other to stimulate the thought and the independent critical power of the reader or auditor."

15. Mr. Granville-Barker writes in *The Exemplary Theatre* :—"Dramatic art, fully developed in the form of the acted play, is the working out—not of the self realisation of the individual, but of society itself. A play is a pictured struggle and reconciliation of human wills and ideas; internecine, with destiny or with circumstance. The struggle must be there, and either the reconciliation or the tragedy of the failure, and it is generally in the development of character by clash and mutual adjustment, that the determinant to the struggle is found. What livelier microcosm of human society, therefore, can there be than an acted play? . . . Neither topically, nor in terms of direct reason nor of pure faith, but by the subtler way of art the drama works, to evolve from the sentient mass a finer mind, responding to the fine fellow-mind of the poet, expressed in terms of a common experience through the medium of human beings, whose art has that deeper significance that we find in the faces and voices of friends with whom we have come through the gates of understanding."

16. Mr. Nugent Monck of the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich, particularly affects Comedy. "As a spiritual force," he writes, "nothing can touch drama outside a definite religion—as it can 'get' people who—for some reason or other—are religiously dead. It is also a useful weapon against those who have the seven deadly virtues—

earnest people who wish to elevate others to their own dullness. Comedy can attack these unassailables."

17. Mr. Kenneth Barnes of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art sounds a note of warning. "As an art," he says, "it consists in the interpretation of the characters of dramatic literature, and when the acting is inspired by a sense of reality and dramatic imagination, I believe there is no more powerful medium for taking people out of themselves and enabling them to look at other human beings in that spirit which includes sympathy and criticism, and leads to right relations between human beings. On the other hand, when the emotional and moral values of the characters shown in action are false and uninspired by artistic insight, the effect is no doubt deleterious both to actors and audience. The criticism does not apply to conventional forms of theatrical entertainments, such as farce, in which the audience know that the happenings on the stage would not happen in life, but only to serious drama in which an effort is made 'to hold the mirror up to Nature.'"

18. The claims made on behalf of the dramatic art by our witnesses may be briefly summarised. They are that —

(a) Drama is a composite art, requiring for its full expression and perfection an understanding of, and proficiency in, other arts.

(b) Drama is at once a most vivid and most subtle artistic medium, and is therefore a powerful instrument for the conveyance of ideas

(c) In consequence drama can be under right conditions a most potent instrument of moral, artistic and intellectual progress, and under wrong conditions an equally potent instrument of moral, artistic and intellectual degradation.

19. These claims appear to us to be justified and to lead to the conclusion that drama is a matter of the greatest interest to all concerned in Education. Accepting this



conclusion we consider that the further examination of the question can be most profitably undertaken by an inquiry into the history of the dramatic art, with a view to determining what place it has occupied in our national life, and by an attempt to analyse the situation existing to-day with a view to discovering how far the drama is acting as an instrument of education, and of social progress, and under what conditions.

### III. HISTORY OF THE DRAMATIC ART.

#### *Sources of History.*

20. Our enquiry into the history of the dramatic art in England and Wales has been of necessity very limited in character and has been directed solely to the question of its popular appeal. We addressed to a number of witnesses the enquiry how far this history suggests that the English people had a particular delight in, and capacity for, this form of artistic expression. We received a number of interesting replies, and we desire to express our special indebtedness to Professor A. E. Morgan and Professor Allardyce Nicoll. The account, however, which we give here represents our conclusions from the evidence and not the opinion of any one of our witnesses.

#### *Folk Drama in England.*

21. Drama in England has its origin in the Folk Play. But it is clear that the drama arising out of folk conditions was necessarily of a very rude character. Drama requires performers literate enough to study parts, self-restrained enough not to interrupt each other, and disciplined enough to accept the discretion of a trainer. They are not likely to be forthcoming at an excited rustic merry-making. Even in Greece the evolution of dithyramb into drama had to wait for the evolution of the City state. We do not in fact find anything recognisable as primitive folk drama which gets much beyond the miming of a sacrifice probably as a survival from abandoned religious ritual, or of such a simple idea as the contest of winter and summer.

22. At some time in the fourteenth century such mimicry took a more elaborate form in England by the introduction of Robin Hood and his Fellows as the performers of the dance. This is less likely to have been due to a natural development than to the influence of minstrels, themselves influenced by French models. In more northern districts other national heroes, Galgacus or Sterkader,

seem to have been similarly worked into the mimic sword dance. By the sixteenth century even comparatively small towns and villages had become accustomed to dramatic representation of other than folk origin. For instance, religious plays, outgrowing the Churches in which they started, came into the hands of burgesses of the big cities, and from these spread into quite small places. There are records of performances during the fourteenth century given by performers from Kent and Sussex villages at Lydd and New Romney, and similar performances are found elsewhere during the sixteenth century, especially in East Anglia.

23. Towards the end of the sixteenth century local plays of this kind seem to have disappeared. This was probably due, partly to the puritan ban upon plays in general, and especially upon any religious plays of Catholic colouring, and partly to the competition of a large number of Strolling Companies of professional actors, who had a very widespread range in the sixteenth century in England. The villages became once more mere spectators. There are some traces of strictly local performances up to the end of the century, but they were clearly often instigated in the interest of religious or political propaganda.

24. The history of the folk drama directly arising out of the common life of the countryside does not suggest any great capacity for dramatic expression on the part of the people. Folk plays can hardly be said to have contributed much to the dramatic tradition in England, though undoubtedly the fact that they were performed throughout the length and breadth of England did much to keep alive and foster the dramatic sense, and their strange blend of paganism and history must at least have made the later more elaborate dramatisation of scenes from English history seem not unnatural.

*Drama under the auspices of the Church.*

25. There were, however, other influences at work which had a far more profound effect on the drama in England.

The plays presented by the Church and the Guilds had clearly a very great attraction for the people, and great influence on all subsequent development. These plays were not products of the national genius. They had their origin elsewhere, and their counterpart throughout Europe. But as they had a very great influence on the English drama, it is desirable to touch briefly on the dramatic tradition in Europe out of which they had grown.

26. In Greece drama had grown rapidly out of primitive ritual until it reached its full development in the fifth century B.C. at Athens when some of the world's greatest masterpieces both in Tragedy and in Comedy were produced. The conditions under which the dramatists worked were most favourable, and such as no dramatist has been so fortunate as to enjoy since. Greek drama had both a really intimate connection with national religion and the full support of the Athenian state. Greece in fact illustrates most forcibly our conclusion that the drama can be under right conditions a great instrument of progress. Rome on the other hand illustrates our conclusion that under wrong conditions drama can be a most potent instrument of degradation. At best it was borrowed from Greece and dilettante in character. At its worst it descended into an abyss of license and brutality culminating in the actual burning in the arena of a criminal in the last act of the *Hercules Furens*.

27. The dramatic art in such circumstances came under the ban of the Church; all actors, singers and dancers being excommunicated. The barbarian invaders of Rome found mountebanks and buffoons in possession of the theatre. Yet such was the appeal of the drama to human instinct that it was under the auspices of the Church that the revival took place. There were three stages, the liturgical mystery at church festivals, which was used to bring the reality of scriptural events more clearly before the people, the miracle play which recounted the lives of the Saints, and finally the morality which was allegorical

characters who push and pull Adam and Eve to hell, and "call aloud to each other with glee . . . and clash their pots and kettles that they may be heard without," or carry the sinful souls off pick-a-back; Noah and his wife come to blows with broomsticks; Saul's servant has a squabble with the "gentyلمانys servuuant" whom he takes for an ostler at the inn where they bait on the road down to Damascus; the rogue Mak is tossed in a blanket for sheep-stealing just before the angels appear to announce the birth of Christ.

*The Elizabethan period.*

30. By Elizabethan times, therefore, we had a long tradition of a drama closely akin to everyday life; a mixture of tragedy and comedy. The representation of these plays had gradually become more and more elaborate. At Canterbury not only had they carts, wheels, a mitre, two bags of leather containing blood, and other properties for their great play of *The Martyrdom of St Thomas*, but they even produced an Angel (price 22d.) who flapped his wings as he turned on a hidden wynch greased with soap. The whole structure of the plays, however, was artless in the extreme. The Morality Plays were stiffer, but no more classic in conception, and such plays as Bale's *Kyng Johan* with its extraordinary jumble of historical characters and personifications, its Steven Langton and Dissimulation, Cardinal Pandulphus and Cyvylye Order, were no better in this respect. It is small wonder that classical scholars, such as Sidney, were shocked by the crudities of the early Elizabethan stage; "Where you shall have Asia of the one side and Afric of the other, and so many other kingdoms that the Player when he cometh in must ever begin with telling where he is or else the tale will not be conceived"; or of the dramatist who "in three hours runs through the world, marries, gets children, makes children men, men to conquer kingdoms, murder Monsters, and bringeth gods from heaven and devils from hell."

31. The Interludes of the fifteenth century and sixteenth century form a link between the Morality and Comedy proper. John Rastell's *The Nature of the Four Elements* for instance is described by its author as :

" A new interlude and a mery of the nature of the iii elements declarynge many proper poynts of phylosophy naturall and of dyuers strange landys and of dyuers strange effect and causis, which interlude if the whole matter be played will contain the space of an hour and a half ; but if you list you may leave out much of the said matter . . ." and into which, according to a note " yf ye lyst ye may brynge in a Dysguysing."

32 The great turning points of English drama came with the establishment of professional actors, of theatres, of blank verse as a medium of expression, and with the division of plays into acts and scenes. But while drama ceased to be the simple production of unlettered people as part of their own normal life, it neither lost its hold upon them, nor became too remote. That the audience took a sometimes embarrassingly lively interest in the performance is sufficiently proved by Edmund Gayton's account of the theatre in his youth : " I have known upon one of these festivals, but especially at Shrovetide, where the players have been appointed, notwithstanding their bills to the contrary, to act what the major part of the company had a mind to ; sometime *Tamerlaine*, sometimes *Jugurth*, sometimes *The Jew of Malta*, and sometimes parts of all these ; at last, none of the three taking, they were forced to undress and put off their tragic habits and conclude the day with *The Merry Milkmaids*. And unless this were done and the popular humour satisfied, as sometimes it so fortune that the players were refractory, the benches, the tiles, the laths, the stones, oranges, apples, nuts flew about most liberally ; as these were mechanics of all professions who fell every one to his own trade and dissolved a house in an instant and made a ruin of a stately fabric."

33. There seems no reason to doubt that both during the mediaeval and during the Elizabethan period the drama was a subject of widespread popular interest and attraction. Such a condition is a necessary precedent to the growth of a great school of dramatists. One of our witnesses, Miss M. S. West, regards Shakespeare alone as sufficient evidence of a national talent for the drama. "The type," she writes, "of genius a nation produces always gives some indication of that nation's own specific gifts and excellencies. The production of Shakespeare alone would seem to indicate that the British race has a unique dramatic gift; that the drama, in other words, is its natural and appropriate form of self-expression. But this hypothesis is supported by history. Shakespeare did not arise out of the void. He grew upon a ground of intensely vivid national life, a life which was too practical and full of exuberant vitality to find appropriate expression in any of the plastic arts alone, but rather in a combination of all the arts, uniquely blended to form a background for the supreme art of living as represented by its most expressive vehicle, the stage."

34. Miss Elsie Fogerty in her evidence quoted a passage from a lecture at the inauguration of the School of Dramatic Art which makes a similar claim :—"The period of greatest creative activity in any art has been a period of widely diffused popular interest in that particular form of expression, and the direction of that creative impulse seems often determined by a peculiar facility in regard to some particular artistic medium . . . . Whenever a nation has spontaneously shown a genius for any of the arts, its expression has tended almost inevitably to create for itself fixed canons of form. . . . Drama is the natural expression of our national genius, it is not a failure of that genius, or of the power of our national life and ideals we have to fear. . . ."

35. Two elements contributing to the widespread interest in the drama, and to the greatness of the dramatic output of the period, are worthy of special mention. Drama had

had for a long period allies in the Church and the Schools. This feature is specially mentioned by Dr. Boas, and we agree with his conclusion that if the drama is again to take its full place in English life, it must again seek the same allies. Our survey of the present dramatic revival will show to what extent these conditions are again being established.

### 1642—1900.

36. In the succeeding centuries the popular appeal of the drama is less clearly established. Even in the Elizabethan period there was a powerful faction who feared and hated the theatre, less perhaps on account of the inherent wickedness of dramatic performances as such (certain of the puritans themselves wrote moralities) than on account of its attendant evils. It is true that in the heat of controversy Gosson declared the argument of tragedies to be "wrath, cruelty, injury, murder, either violent by sword or voluntary by poison" and the "ground-work of comedies . . . love, cozenage, flattery, bawdry;" but there are few Elizabethan pamphleteers whose pens do not run away with them at times. A more serious objection was that of the city fathers who viewed with alarm the cheerful and not infrequently riotous crowds who collected to see plays, and who looked upon such gatherings, perhaps not unreasonably, as a means of spreading the plague. The Court fashion for Masques and the inordinate sums spent on their production under the Stuarts must have done much to intensify Puritan dislike for the stage, and it is not surprising that theatres were suppressed under the Commonwealth, though the suppression was evidently not easily effected, and as late as 1648 it was found necessary for a party of soldiers to raid the Cockpit "and carry away the actors in their habits" to prison. And it is noteworthy that "drolls," comic scenes adapted from plays, were performed during the Commonwealth at taverns and fairs; a sure sign of the popular taste. The Cambridge History of English Literature gives a list of such "drolls," including *The Grave Diggers' Colloquy from Hamlet*; *Falstaff*,



*he Bouncing Knight from Henry IV, and The Merry Conceits, of Bottom the Weaver.*

37. With the Restoration came a revival of dramatic performances. Pepys, puritan as his sympathies were in many respects, was a frequent attendant at the theatre, and his comments on plays and players throw considerable light on the development of dramatic art in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

"Feb. 23rd. 1660. I see the gallants begin to be tyred with the vanity and pride of the theatre actors who are indeed grown very proud and rich."

"Jan. 3rd. 1661. To the Theatre where was acted *Beggars Bush*, it being very well done, and here the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage."

The era of famous actresses was beginning.

38. During the 40 years however between 1660 and 1700 there was a greater divorce between the people and the theatre than in any other period. The people who attended were, in the main, the aristocrats and middle-class people, such as Pepys, who desired to advance themselves with the Court party, and the citizens in general appeared to regard the Playhouse as a place of scandal.

39. Few signs of change are evident before the beginning of the eighteenth century, but gradually the bar of distinction between the courtiers and the people was breaking down. Intermarriage between the two classes became more common, and the theatre was influenced by the "moral" reform established in the reign of Queen Anne. The theatres still remained centres of fashion, but they were no longer toys of the Court party, and there was an endeavour to substitute moral doctrine for the immoral laughter of previous times. The result of this is to be seen in the building of new theatres, the rising importance of the *théâtre de la foire*, and the re-establishment of provincial companies. In drama, the change is marked by the production of "bourgeois" tragedies such as Lillo's

*George Barnwell* and of sentimental comedies such as Cumberland's *The West Indian* or Holcroft's *The Road to Ruin*.

40. By the act passed in 1737, the number of theatres was theoretically limited, but in practice the act had not the full effect it appeared to have. Regular theatres such as that at Goodman's Fields still continued with the production of tragedy and of comedy, disguising the performances under the veil of "Concerts" or "Tea Parties." Other houses of entertainment gave numerous ballets and pantomimes and what were virtually musical comedies. Countless theatres reared their heads in the various provincial centres.

41. At the same time, the "patent" theatres were considerably enlarged, the managers evidently being conscious of the demand for seating accommodation. Many prologues and epilogues of the late eighteenth century speak of the divisions of the house; the pit (i.e., pit and stalls) being frequented by a 'thinking' public, evidently the more sober-minded among aristocracy and upper middle class, the boxes being filled by fashionable ladies; and the upper galleries being clamorous with the demands of a genuinely popular audience. The musical drama and the melodrama of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were forms of dramatic art devised unconsciously to meet the requirements of all these sections of the theatrical community.

42. The ballad operas of this period suggest that the people, no less than the Court, exerted considerable influence on the type of entertainment provided. In many ballad operas as many as half the airs are traditional, (English, Scotch and sometimes Irish), sometimes even more. The type of tune corresponded to those in Playford's collection; some of them were included in that collection. Other airs were borrowed from foreign sources (Handel or the Italians) and some were, or purported to be, original composition. The anonymous "Mr. Seedo"

who set some of Fielding's words, imitates the English Country Dance tune, and as late as 1775 we find Linley incorporating a considerable number of folk-songs in the music for Sheridan's *The Duenna*.

43. In the early nineteenth century, a certain air of fashionable abandon came to cling once more to certain portions of the theatre. The "Bucks" and "Corinthians" of the Regency often found here a happy hunting ground. But even when licence was permitted in box or stall, the ordinary people continued to patronise the theatres. There was never the atmosphere which surrounded the play-houses in the days of Charles II.

44. In 1843 "patents" were abolished and, with the new regulations governing theatres, many playhouses sprang up in the latter half of the nineteenth century giving greater scope to the popular demand, and this tradition has been carried on to our own times. The abolition of the "patent" theatres did not, from one point of view, conduce to the benefit of the drama. The patentees, when they were in any sense public spirited men, felt themselves under some obligation to keep Shakespeare and the classical repertory alive. Covent Garden and Drury Lane then had some claim to be called National Theatres.

45. In the latter half of the nineteenth century two developments took place. One was the decline of the old stock companies, the other the emergence of a new school of dramatists, whose plays represented a great advance on those of the first half of the century. The decline of the stock companies was due in some measure to the new drama, to which they were unable to adapt themselves, but it was also largely influenced by the improvement in communications. It is of interest that the "stock company" shows every sign of revival at the present time.

46. In the closing years of the nineteenth century there came into prominence "the play of ideas," largely

under the influence of Ibsen and Shaw, which has been the medium for expressing the social and economic ideals of a growing section of working-class opinion, and has thus tended to give the drama a yet wider appeal.

47. Developments which have taken place in the twentieth century have not yet passed into history, and may more fittingly be described in other chapters of this report. We will endeavour here to provide an answer to the question, which we set out to consider in this chapter, how far the history of the dramatic art suggested that the English people had a particular delight in, and capacity for, this form of artistic expression. We have been asked to accept three points of view. The first is the most favourable. "In one field of art, at least," it runs, "there can be no question not only of the unchallenged greatness of English production, but of the spontaneous and widespread response its practice invokes in English people of all types. From the days when our forefathers performed their ritual dances, or enacted rude representations of myth or history, down to the present, there has never been a time when drama in some form has not made a popular appeal. It may be necessary to persuade people that they enjoy a concert, to cajole them out of neglect of that choral singing which was once our pride; but the mere announcement of almost any play will fill a village hall. Not even Puritanism could keep Milton from writing Masques, or make Cromwell himself condemn that solemn recitation of verse to music which proved the fore-runner of English opera. The history of the drama is indeed interwoven with the history of our nation. With us, as with the Greeks, drama proved the most direct and effective method of religious instruction; the natural vehicle for satire; the popular picture of contemporary life and manners."

48. Professor Allardyce Nicoll is inclined to the same view. "It is my belief," he writes, "that only for one brief period in our theatrical history was there a divorce between the playhouse and the people. The history of our

social life shows a constant and increasing appreciation by the people as a whole for dramatic representation."

49. Professor Morgan is the least convinced. He concludes his evidence with the following passage:—"In this memorandum there has been no attempt to make a comparison of the English with other nations in the matter of dramatic appreciation and capacity. I have made it my object to meet the opinion that the English are deficient in these respects. The history of our drama gives colour to such an opinion, but it has been the aim of this memorandum to argue (a) that a deeper consideration of all the facts does not warrant the deduction that the English people as a whole lack dramatic power and appreciation of histrionic ability; (b) that history shows that when social conditions were favourable drama was genuinely popular; and (c) that at the present time, when there are clear signs that those favourable conditions are recurring, the effect is already becoming evident in the shape of a dramatic revival of national scope."

50. If we accept the least optimistic of these conclusions, we have yet good grounds for hoping that the drama is sufficiently deep-rooted in the instincts of the people to ensure that the recent dramatic revival is not ephemeral in character but will substantially enrich our national life.

## B.—SURVEY OF THE PRESENT POSITION.

### IV. THE PROFESSIONAL THEATRE.

#### *Limitations of Enquiry.*

51. We propose in the ensuing chapters in this report first to survey the present situation and later to attempt a critical evaluation of the elements in that situation which all persons interested in Education must desire to encourage and support. Our survey must of necessity be subject to severe limitations. The dramatic art is practised by many types of organisation, of which some fall outside our purview.

52. On the professional side there is the theatre organised on a commercial basis, which is the most familiar type, and the theatre employing professional artists but not organised for profit, such as the "Old Vic," the Lena Ashwell Players, the Arts League of Service, and certain provincial theatres which have acquired the title "repertory," though this word is not always an accurate description of their activities. There are the Schools of Dramatic Art, which train artists for the professional stage and teachers of elocution and the dramatic art, who render great help to amateur societies. On the amateur side, there are societies which, though organised on an amateur basis, are under professional direction, and present a repertory of plays throughout the year, such as the Leeds Art Theatre and the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich. These societies commonly set out to be the "repertory" theatres for their neighbourhood. There are societies, wholly amateur, in educational and other institutions which have similar ambitions, and others which practise the dramatic art solely for their own entertainment and that of their friends.

53. Of these various types the professional theatre organised on a commercial basis, and the Schools of Dramatic Art, in so far as they train artists for the professional stage, do not come within our survey. We have neither the qualifications nor the desire to investigate the circumstances

of the theatre as a profession or as a commercial venture. We desire to say however that we are well aware that the standard of acting and of production is in general higher in the commercial theatre than in any other type, and that many managers are actuated in their choice of play by artistic rather than purely commercial motives. But we do not think that our inability to survey or to criticise the professional theatre seriously affects the value of our conclusions on the drama as an instrument of education for this reason.

54 The two divisions (a) Professional Theatre (b) Amateur Societies correspond generally to two divisions on the educational side which may be briefly described as (a) Education through seeing the drama (b) Education through participation in the drama.

55. Now the effect of seeing a great play nobly produced and finely acted is profoundly moving, and has the highest educational value. A great actor can give a life and meaning to the creation of the dramatist which the ordinary man cannot perceive in reading the text, nor through an attempt to represent the part himself before an audience. The motive of a man in going to a theatre is not only to see a great play; he is impelled as much, if not more, by a desire to see great acting, a noble interpretation of a part. The greatest acting is the prerogative of the professional artist, the greatest production of a play the prerogative of the professional stage. But apart from this consideration, all the educational benefits which are inherent in seeing the drama are equally inherent in participation in the drama, and participation confers many benefits which are not conferred by the witnessing of a play. It carries with it those intellectual interests and moral qualities which are developed by the art of acting and all other arts incidental to the production of a play. In surveying the dramatic revival very largely from the point of view of amateur societies, we shall miss few of the elements in the drama which are of value in the education of the community.

Briefly we conceive that the drama reaches its highest realisation as a form of art in the professional theatre, as an instrument of education in the hands of the amateur.

56. We have felt bound however to make a brief reference to the professional theatre not organised for profit owing to the great intrinsic interest of some of the enterprises from a social standpoint, and to the light which they throw on the means best adapted to bring good drama before the people.

57. The "Old Vic" and the "Lena Ashwell Players" have attempted to present the great masterpieces of our language at prices which will bring them within reach of the very poor, in fact to found a People's Theatre. The Arts League of Service has conducted a remarkable series of tours in the countryside with a similar object. The "repertory" theatres in great towns have been founded in part with this object and in part for the production of plays which for some reason are not presented by the local commercial theatres.

58. Our principal reason for considering the last type is that suggestions have been made that the professional "repertory" theatre provides a complete solution of the problem of bringing the people in touch with good plays, and that so far as this object is concerned there is no need to depend upon the production of plays by amateurs. We shall consider this point very fully.

59. We have also mentioned the work of certain Playgoers Societies, often organised in connection with "repertory" theatres, which assist the production of good plays and conduct lectures, play readings and other activities. But we have not taken into consideration those societies in London which produce plays on Sunday evenings to an audience limited to their own members. The services which they have rendered to the drama are considerable, but are not of the particular character which we are attempting to consider in this report.



60. Owing to considerations of space, and for other reasons, we cannot in our survey mention all the societies, professional and amateur, which have been commended by our witnesses. We have been bound to make a selection, and the absence of any society from the survey must not be read as suggesting that the work of that society is of less importance than the work of a society which is mentioned. We have moreover given a brief account of each society, so far as possible, in the terms used by witnesses, with their general comments, since this evidence has led us to a number of conclusions on controversial subjects, and we are aware that the evidence may bear an interpretation other than that which we have drawn from it.

*" Repertory " Theatres.*

61. The word "repertory" theatre will always be associated with Miss Horniman's great venture at Manchester which gave to the world the work of Stanley Houghton and the Manchester School of Dramatists. The collapse of this venture shortly after the war is greatly to be regretted. The Birmingham Repertory Theatre was started before the war in a private house by six people who were unable to find complete satisfaction in the productions of the commercial theatres in Birmingham. They met and read plays. From these small beginnings the Theatre has grown to its present fame. It is housed in a small but admirable building, the company is professional and has included many artists of distinction. The most notable achievement of the Theatre has been the production of a very large number of plays of great merit which the commercial theatre has been unwilling to produce, or has produced at too rare intervals. In eleven years two hundred plays have been given. The classical repertory of Shakspeare and Sheridan has had due place; there have been six plays of Ibsen and twelve of Shaw including the first production of the complete cycle of *Back to Methuselah*. A place has also been found not only for a great number of plays by the younger school of English and Irish dramatists, but for the works by the more

distinguished contemporary dramatists of other countries, which are rarely seen in this country. But for the enterprise of the Theatre *Abraham Lincoln* and *The Immortal Hour* might never have been performed in a theatre.

62. The debt which the contemporary theatre owes to the enterprise of Sir Barry Jackson and his friends can hardly be over estimated. It is a matter for regret that the Theatre has been from time to time on the verge of closing owing to lack of support. Fortunately on the last occasion an appeal to the citizens of Birmingham to guarantee an audience met with sufficient response, but even now the Theatre cannot be said to be well supported. At one performance of a notable play by a foreign dramatist the audience amounted to about 12. Sir Barry Jackson expressed himself in evidence as greatly indebted to the Birmingham Playgoers Society which has rendered him consistent support.

63. Sir Barry Jackson considers that the programme of a "repertory" theatre must never fall below a high level. "I do not think that the "repertory" theatre has any right to temporise between the commercial stage of the day and great art. I will not consent to put on bad plays in order that I may have money to provide good plays."

64. The Liverpool Playhouse has been in existence for fourteen years. It shares with Birmingham the advantages of an admirable theatre, an excellent company and producer, and a Playhouse Circle. On the other hand, owing to financial considerations the directors have been less able to take risks in the production of new plays, and the Playhouse has not the same high record as the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in this respect. The Playhouse can however point to a great achievement in maintaining over this period so high a level both in choice of play and in production.

65. In Yorkshire there are a number of societies which are partly professional and partly amateur. These societies

have to their credit many productions of great merit, of which perhaps the most notable has been that of the Austrian mystery play *The Great World Theatre* by the Leeds Art Theatre. But the expression "repertory" theatre is commonly understood to denote a professional organisation, and the circumstances of theatres which are not required to pay all their actors and staff cannot usefully be compared with those of theatres which are entirely professional. We accordingly have included the Yorkshire societies in our consideration of amateur societies.

66. There are other "repertory" theatres of note at Oxford, Hull, Newcastle-on-Tyne and Bristol. Mr. J. B. Fagan's Oxford Players have given a programme of consistently high quality. At the Hull Little Theatre the programme for the present season includes plays by Ibsen, Björnson, St. John Ervine, Susan Glaspell and Harold Chapin. At the "Playhouse," Newcastle-on-Tyne, the Repertory Company began its second season in October. The Little Theatre, Bristol, is of particular interest because of the active support which it receives from the local Rotary Club. Several of the leading citizens of Bristol, among them Mr. Stanley Hill, the Honorary Secretary of the Bristol Rotary Club, thought that there was a need for better drama than that provided by the existing commercial theatres of the city. They took from the Corporation a lease of the Lesser Colston Hall and appointed Mr. Rupert Harvey as producer. We are informed that "each and every member of the Rotary Club takes a definite practical interest by lending or giving service and goods as and when they are required for stage purposes," and that the Club "manages the financial side of the scheme to the extent of pushing the sale of books of tickets and guaranteeing an overdraft should one ever be needed. There has not however been any occasion for them to take up their financial guarantee, as the theatre has paid its way from the start, owing to commonsense having been the principal plank in the platform "

67. This venture has been so successful that whereas the first season lasted for only 19 weeks, the second continued for 41, and in the present season arrangements have been made for a period of 47 weeks. On examining the long list of plays given we find a very high proportion of modern comedy. The Theatre has not paid the same attention to new plays, or the "play of ideas," as for instance the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, but the plays have always been of a good standard and have been sufficiently various to include *Everyman* as well as *The Pillars of Society* and *An Enemy of the People*. An interesting and not uncommon bye-product of the Little Theatre is said to have been the improvement in quality of the plays given at the commercial theatres.

68. The Rotary Club is not alone in supporting the Little Theatre; the Executive Council includes representatives of the Bristol Playgoers and amateur dramatic societies. The Theatre has clearly started under the happiest auspices.

#### *Playgoers' Societies.*

69. While Bristol is fortunate in the support of a Rotary Club, other "repertory" theatres also have the advantage of the assistance rendered by Playgoers' Societies

70. There are societies of this character in London, Bath, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield and elsewhere. Their membership is often large. Their activities vary, but their common object is to foster interest in the drama and to organise lectures, play readings and visits to the theatre. Occasionally such societies produce plays on their own account. The Sheffield Playgoers have to their credit the production of a number of good plays, including the cycle of *Back to Methuselah*. The Birmingham Playgoers have given a number of plays, including the *Electra* and a version of *Samson Agonistes*.

71. The Manchester Playgoers attempt to bring together every school of dramatic expression from the creative

element found in the Unnamed Society to the groups which are more interested in the drama from a social point of view and are inclined to produce London successes. Visits to theatres are organised, and occasionally subsidies are given to assist the production of good plays whether by professionals or by amateurs. Mrs. Penelope Wheeler has received a subsidy with a view to the production of Greek plays and the Arts League of Service for their programme of one-act plays, music and dancing. Amateurs have been subsidised for the production of such plays as Lascelles Abercrombie's *Viper* and Gordon Bottomley's *King Lear's Wife*. The Catholic Players have been supported for their production of *Everyman*. Support was given in full measure to Miss Horniman at the time when she was conducting the Repertory Theatre. The Leeds Music and Drama League have done work of this character in arranging for Shakespeare performances at the Albert Hall by the Ben Greet Players which were attended by over 3,000 children. Similarly the British Empire Shakespeare Society has given every kind of support to the production of Shakespeare plays, holding dramatic readings in all parts of the country, and arranging with Local Education Authorities for free performances for school children. Clearly these societies are doing the most valuable work in encouraging the production of plays of merit, and their support in the case of ventures such as the "repertory" theatres is indispensable. Unless there is a public which has implicit trust in the management of the Theatre and is prepared to come to every play, the venture of conducting a "repertory" theatre must be hazardous in the extreme.

### "The Old Vic."

72 This conclusion finds striking confirmation in "The Old Vic" which has now after many years an audience whose loyalty to the Theatre and its management has alone made possible the great achievement of the continuous production of opera and Shakespeare plays in a very poor locality. No one who visits "The Old Vic" can fail

notice this peculiar relation between the actors and the audience. Miss Lilian Baylis, whose services to the cause of the drama have been recognised by Oxford University by the conferment of an Honorary Degree, gave us an account of this remarkable venture.

73. She said that " Miss Emma Cons bought the freehold of the ' Old Vic ' in 1880 and handed the title deeds to the Charity Commissioners. The Trust Deed provided that out of the estate the best possible entertainment should be given to the people at the lowest possible prices. Since that date many sorts of entertainment had been given there. In the early days there had been lectures, and out of these Morley College grew. In fact the growth of Morley College had seriously affected the convenience of the theatre, as a certain amount of accommodation which was wanted for the stage and dressing rooms had been handed over to the College. Afterwards there had been concerts and out of these came opera. Finally the opera audience provided the audience for Shakespeare. At one time a penny cinema entertainment had been provided and had shown a profit of £2,000. This money was used for giving symphony concerts, and was lost in the process. Sometimes great actors gave addresses, and the theatre was also lent to societies which gave good plays in aid of worthy objects."

74. " Opera still drew the largest audience, but the Shakespeare plays which had started in 1914 had now nearly reached the same standard. It must be remembered that of the eleven years during which Shakespeare had been running, four had been exceptional owing to war conditions. When *Hamlet* was first played the receipts totalled £5. Now when *Hamlet* was played in its entirety, there was seldom even standing room in the theatre which held 1,700. Every play of Shakespeare had been given. She made an effort to give one or two of the less well-known Shakespeare plays every year. The last of the plays to be given was *Troilus and Cressida*; it was given on the

tercentenary of the publication of the Shakespeare folio. The general programme for a fortnight was nine Shakespeare performances and five operatic."

75. "Other plays had been given in some number. *The Trojan Women* had been given with Sybil Thorndike as Hecuba for a series of performances. During the first part of the run the theatre was empty. On the last night they turned people away. On certain occasions they gave religious plays, such as *Everyman* and the *Chester Nativity Play*. Sometimes she put on old comedies, such as *She Stoops to Conquer*, *The Rivals*, *The School for Scandal*, which was more popular than most of the Shakespeare plays, and *A New Way to pay Old Debts*. One or two modern plays had also been given, such as *Wat Tyler* and Binyon's play *Arthur*. A French society had given French plays mainly for school children towards the end of the War. Lately the theatre had been lent on two afternoons to some players of St. Mary's, Graham Street, who gave religious plays."

76. "Special performances had been given at one time for children from L.C.C. schools. Owing to the action of the District Auditor the London County Council had been compelled to discontinue these performances, but latterly there had been a change in the Board of Education Regulations, and the performances were being resumed. *The Merchant of Venice* was being given this year. She was very proud that Mr Herbert Fisher, when President of the Board, had said that the most valuable hours in a child's school life were spent at the 'Old Vic.' She was disappointed that the Shakespeare festivals which were sometimes held were not more patronised by the schools. She had expected that there would be very considerable support from teachers and school children."

77. "The audience at 'The Old Vic' was very loyal in their complete trust in the management. They were the theatre's greatest asset, and their loyalty was proved by the way in which it was possible to collect small sums

the theatre to help in reconstruction. £6,000 had been collected in this way. They served to advertise the theatre, as they brought their friends, and distributed leaflets everywhere. There was a special 'Old Vic' Magazine. The audience was in the main working class, shop people, artisans and labourers; some of the richer class were coming to the theatre now, but she did not want too many of them to the exclusion of the poorer people. The lowest charge in the theatre was 5d. for the gallery, which held 500. Prices had inevitably gone up since the war, and the prices in the theatre had necessarily risen; even so, most of the seats in the house were 2s. or under. It was very difficult to pay one's way in a people's theatre. Prices had to be cheap. On the other hand, it was not possible to give Shakespeare or opera except with a large company. She did not pay high salaries, as she thought that anyone serving in a people's theatre must be content with a small salary. She had got some money out of public funds. The Carnegie Trust, for instance, had given her £1,500, which had been spent on the wardrobe. The wardrobe was now very good and complete. The scenery was made and painted on the premises. Every effort was made to make both costumes and scenery accurate in every particular and a certain amount of research was carried on at the British Museum."

78. "There was a proposal now being considered for having another theatre of the same kind, north of the Thames, which would work in conjunction with the 'Old Vic.' If this project succeeded it would be a great help. A play could be put on for two weeks, at the 'Old Vic' and then go to the other theatre. Actors found it very difficult to attempt a new play every fortnight. On the other hand she had found that a play would not generally fill the house for three weeks."

79. "Sometimes the 'Old Vic' company went elsewhere. They had given opera at Oxford to an enthusiastic audience. King's College, Cambridge, had asked for a



performance of *Everyman* in their chapel, the first given since Elizabethan times. The Shakespeare Company had been asked to represent British art in Brussels, and had received a very great welcome there."

So "She thought that the influence of the 'Old Vic' had been very great. The drama had a wonderful effect on tired minds, and she thought that it had kept people sane during the war. She remembered one boy who had been blinded in the war—no one could get him to take any interest in life until he was brought one day to the 'Old Vic' to a performance of *Mignon*. From that time he had quite changed. Another man had been cured of stuttering by his love of *Julius Caesar*, of which he had learned every word. There was another man who was on his way to commit suicide by throwing himself over Waterloo Bridge and happened to come into the theatre for a few minutes, not knowing what sort of entertainment was being given there. It happened to be *Everyman* and he had found in it something which gave him enough courage to live."

81. We cannot speak in too high terms of the great work which has been done by Miss Baylis at the "Old Vic." It will always be an example to those who believe that the art of the theatre has a power and influence over the minds of men which justify years of unremitting work and self-sacrifice.

82. The proposal for a theatre north of the Thames working in conjunction with the "Old Vic," to which Miss Baylis referred in her evidence, has lately taken concrete form. A fund has been inaugurated with a view to the purchase and adaptation of the old Sadler's Wells Theatre, and the Carnegie Trustees have generously advanced the sum of £14,200 to meet the cost of purchase. The Trustees have stipulated that reasonable help shall be afforded to other national agencies which though they have their headquarters in London, are mainly concerned to serve the smaller centres of population in the provinces,

and desire the Theatre to serve as a centre for the advancement of the drama as an instrument of education. We wish every success to the proposal.

*The Lena Ashwell Players.*

83. After recording our appreciation of Miss Baylis, we are happy to pay the same tribute to Miss Lena Ashwell. During the war concert parties and repertory companies organised under her direction did splendid service not only in France but in more distant theatres of war, and the work is now being continued in the London Boroughs. In Miss Ashwell's words, "Because we are haunted with the memory of those years with the armies, because we recall the great use we were in healing the sick and encouraging those who fought, because we broke the deadly monotony of life out there, we know we can be of use to the masses of the people in this country."

84. We can best record the work done since the war in the terms of Miss Ashwell's evidence before us. She said that "the Players had their origin in the concert parties which were sent out during the war and had had such a success in France. After the war the Charity Commissioners allowed them to have the small remaining sum of money, which the theatres had collected, with a view to helping a number of artists and musicians who were out of work, and to tide over the time until they could get back to their regular employment. They began their work at Bethnal Green and they also sent concert parties to hospitals for disabled men. At Bethnal Green they did not pay their way or make money, but the reception was very remarkable."

85. "Major Atlee, the Mayor of Stepney, and some other mayors promised their assistance. They felt that there was no co-operation between any part of the nation and its artists, and that the boroughs might lead the way. They agreed that the Lena Ashwell Players would provide the entertainment and that the boroughs would grant special

facilities. They would let them have halls at a cheaper rate than that charged for other purposes, such as whist drives, and they would do their best to make the work known by advertisement. The entire financial liability, however, rested on the Lena Ashwell Players. A small charge for admission was agreed. She thought that unless the people gave something, their success would be ephemeral. If the people gave something, however small, it would create an interest and make them think and talk about the drama. Their ultimate object was to establish a building in every town which would never be used for any other purpose but the recreation of the people, the best music, the best plays, the best cinema, etc."

86. "The first year they had only three halls. One of these was at Shoreditch. It was a beautiful hall, but the population of Shoreditch was extraordinarily poor. There was no hall in Limehouse or Stepney, so the People's Palace was taken. It was built for concerts and was not suited to the drama, and the plays were not a success. At Hackney the Mayor died just when they were completing the arrangements and nothing further could be done."

87. "The Players had now taken the Century Theatre at Notting Hill, which was one of the old patent theatres. To comply with the requirements of the London County Council they had been compelled to find £1,500 for alterations. They believed that if they could find the money for these alterations they would be entirely self-supporting. The Century Theatre was specially suited to their requirements. They tried to give plays at the Century Theatre on three nights a week."

88. "The Lena Ashwell Players had at the end of the 1923-24 season produced 88 plays. In six months they had played to audiences numbering 112,922. The plays included Shakespeare, Shaw, Sheridan, Galsworthy and all the best plays written in the language. They had produced plays in Battersea, Bethnal Green, Canning

Town, Edmonton, Greenwich, Deptford, Lewisham, White-chapel, Camberwell, Winchmore Hill and many other places."

89. "There could be no profits in repertory work, because the only possibility of making money in the theatre was a long run. But a repertory theatre might pay its way. One had to be very careful not to encroach on the work of other companies working in the same place at the same time. There might be some co-operation with the larger companies, and an interchange of programmes at the beginning of the season, in order to prevent overlapping. She had found that some voluntary organisations were very helpful in providing an audience. They made all the arrangements for the players and held themselves definitely responsible for a number of tickets."

90. "She was sure that the Lena Ashwell Players were building up a great tradition. The same people came week after week to see them. And from many letters and conversations she knew that they had had a great influence. She had not found that people got tired of seeing the same actors. On the contrary the audience got to know and to look on them as old friends. She was sure that the drama was a very powerful civilising influence. This had been the experience of her managing director, Mr. Harold Gibson, in Russia. Nothing helped the people more when there was trouble. She had noticed this when the troops burned the huts at Honfleur. The authorities sent for the "Concerts at the Front" party; they played *Candida* and all was quiet again. She thought that the drama kept people from going over the edge. What she noticed more than anything else was the curious hunger of the mass of the people. It took a long time to develop taste. If one was listening to ragtime one could not immediately adjust one's mind to Beethoven. If people saw only one Shakespeare comedy in their lives, they were not educated sufficiently to enjoy it. The only remedy was to play Shakespeare constantly. She had found that Shakespeare was more enjoyed by the troops during the War than any

other dramatist. In their work Shakespeare and Shaw always drew a large audience. Religious plays required a certain atmosphere and *Everyman* had not been a success when it was given by the Players. Dickens was no use when dramatised. For a long time after the War people would not stand tragedy, because there had been so much suffering, but the demand for tragedy was now on the increase."

91. "She thought that it might be of interest to the Committee if she gave some indication of the success which had attended the plays given in the last five years. She would divide them into three classes —

### I. *Successes.*

Twelfth Night	Mr. Pim Passes By
The Taming of the Shrew	Belinda
As You Like It	The Younger Generation
The Merry Wives of Windsor	The Witness for the Defence
The Merchant of Venice	The Lion and the Mouse
Othello	The Romantic Young Lady
Much Ado About Nothing	The Bill of Divorcement
Macbeth	Caste
You Never Can Tell	The Bathroom Door
Man and Superman	Ann
Candida	Passers By.
Fanny's First Play	A Pair of Spectacles
Pygmalion	The Child in Flanders
The Devil's Disciple	The Likes of Her
The School for Scandal	Merely Mary Ann
She Stoops to Conquer	Leah Kleschna
The Country Wife	Diana of Dobsons
The Tragedy of Nan	Trilby
The Doll's House	Hobson's Choice
The Skin Game	His Excellency the Governor
His House in Order	The Message from Mars
Lady Windermere's Fan	The Purse Strings
Mrs. Dane's Defence	The Beggar Prince
Caroline	The Brave and the Fair

## II. "So So"

The Morals of Marcus	Mrs. Gorringer's Necklace
Getting Married	The Celluloid Cat
The Importance of Being Ernest	The Mock Doctor
The Gay Lord Quex	Sweet Lavender
The Liars	The Young Person in Pink
The Thief	Rutherford and Son
Diplomacy	Woman to Woman
The Walls of Jericho	Doormats
The Duke of Killiecrankie	The Elder Miss Blossom

## III. "No"

Widowers' Houses	Niobe
Everyman	Our Boys
A Christmas Carol	The Rivals
Prunella	Smith
Paolo and Francesca	The Case of Lady Camber
Liberty Hall	The Naked Truth
The Mollusc	Shortage
Cousin Kate	John Glayd's Honour
The Easiest Way	

92. "She did not agree that amateur dramatic societies could do the work which 'repertory' theatres set out to do. These societies often did much better plays than the commercial theatre, but their standard of performance was far lower, and the amateur was inclined to believe that he could do it as well as professionals. The theatre was a place where vanity was very much inclined to be stimulated. But she agreed that amateur dramatic work was useful as a means of arousing interest in the drama. She thought that the only solution was the 'repertory' theatre. If the drama was left entirely to the commercial stage it would never become the property of the people, nor were many great plays likely to be produced. She thought that the drama should be supported out of public funds. It was a great

instrument of education. It was an incomparable instrument for stimulating sympathy and awakening a knowledge of life."

*Conclusions in regard to "repertory" theatres.*

93. There is one other organisation professional in character which we propose to consider before turning to amateur societies, the Arts League of Service. But as the work of the League is carried on almost exclusively in rural areas, and the companies are continuously on tour, their experiences hardly bear on the problem of the "repertory" theatre. At this stage therefore we consider it convenient to summarise the points which appear to us to arise out of the evidence which we have recounted.

94. In the first place we note that with one exception the "repertory" theatres are located in very large centres of population. The public within reach of "The Old Vic" and the "Lena Ashwell Players" is numbered in millions, and of the provincial "repertory" theatres in hundreds of thousands. The one exception is Oxford, which as a University town might be expected to have a high proportion of its population interested in good plays.

95. It is clear, however, that notwithstanding this consideration the venture of conducting a "repertory" theatre is precarious in the extreme.

96. We therefore conclude that while the "repertory" theatre may solve the problem of bringing good drama before the people in great cities, it is not at present, and will not be in the near future, the means by which the great mass of the people living in small centres of population may be brought into touch with good drama.

97. The amateur society therefore deserves every encouragement from the point of view of giving the people an acquaintance with the literature of the drama, apart from any benefit which may be conferred by the art of acting and other arts incidental to the production of a

We find ourselves unable to agree with Miss Ashwell's views on the amateur society.

98. As regards the conduct of "repertory" theatres, we prefer to offer no opinion. The factors to be taken into account vary greatly in different areas. We offer two conclusions, however, based on the evidence of Miss Baylis and Miss Ashwell. The first is that the plays of Shakespeare however little they may attract the West End of London never fail in their attractiveness to a popular audience. The second is that when a popular audience has been attracted into a theatre, its judgment of the merits of a play is generally good, and that many of the greatest plays in our language stand a better chance of success when presented to a popular audience than when presented to the West-end playgoer. We submitted the list of plays, without indicating the measure of success which they had won, to two dramatic critics with the request that they would divide the list into three categories on the basis of artistic merit alone. On comparing the lists we found that of the 35 plays which were not regarded as successes by Miss Lena Ashwell, five only were regarded by either of the dramatic critics as falling into the first class on artistic merits. These were *Everyman*, which Miss Ashwell regarded as requiring an atmosphere other than that of a theatre, *The Rivals*, *The Mock Doctor*, *Prunella* and *The Importance of being Ernest*.

### *The Arts League of Service.*

99. We come now to the Arts League of Service. This League was founded in 1919 with headquarters at 1, Robert Street, Adelphi, W.C.2. In pursuance of its object of bringing the arts into everyday life, the League has organised tours throughout England and part of Scotland, every English county with the exception of Rutland having been visited. The first performance was given in May, 1919, when the company set out in a borrowed station wagonette with a capital of £25 on a fortnight's



tour in Sussex villages. In six years this Travelling Theatre visited 550 towns and villages and has covered over 12,000 miles. A car now carries the whole company and a complete theatrical outfit. For six years the League was only able to afford the maintenance of one company, but through the generosity of the Carnegie Trust a second company has now taken the road.

100. In September 1925 in the course of a tour in the Highlands a company of the League gave a Command Performance at Balmoral Castle.

101. The League requires each village which the company visits to provide a hall, to make the visit known throughout the neighbourhood by every means in its power, to provide hospitality on the night of the visit and to guarantee a sum of £20 for each performance. Money taken above that amount up to £15 becomes the property of the organisers, and any further receipts are shared. The League meets salaries, royalties and expenses of production. The Company usually stays one night at a village, but sometimes for two or three nights. In a town they prefer to stay for a week. The continual movement from place to place and the variety of the programme which includes one act plays, dancing and singing means very hard work. So far 60 plays have been produced; of these *Arms and the Man* has been the only three act play.

102. The Company cannot give Shakespeare as there are not enough players. The one act plays produced are of a most attractive character and include several which have not been produced on the commercial stage. In their evidence representatives of the League said that "the play which went best in the countryside was a play with a good human interest. The poor seemed to like tragedy. *Riders to the Sea* and *Campbell of Kilmore* had proved very popular."

103. The tours do not represent the League's only activity. The London headquarters has been enabled to build up an intimate connection with many villages and is able to give advice, lend plays and books, and generally to stimulate local efforts in the production of plays. .

104. Early in 1925 the League arranged for the company to have a short London season, at which the usual programme given in the villages was presented. Representatives of this Committee were invited to attend performances.

105. They were much impressed by the success with which the company contrived to get effective results out of quite simple material, exploiting the artistic possibilities to the full. The sea chanties and Gaelic songs and the "absurdity" of *St. Valentine's Day* were particularly successful in this way, and a wordless play *Romance Jocosu*, set to music by Granados, recalling the Spanish legend of Love and Death accidentally changing their weapons with ludicrous results, reached a high artistic level. They were impressed also by the very happy relations existing between the members of the company, and between the company and the audience.

106. The visit of the company to villages which have perhaps no other opportunity in the year of seeing any production of an artistic character cannot fail to be a source of great pleasure and inspiration, and we consider that the League is much to be congratulated both on their aims and on the admirable spirit with which they have carried them to success. The general conclusions which we draw from their evidence as regards the countryside accord with two conclusions which we have already reached as regards the professional theatre in the towns. The first is that a popular audience in the countryside, no less than in the towns, appreciates to the full the best art when it is presented to them with due regard to simplicity. The second is that people in the countryside will always be starved of the best drama unless they endeavour to present

it themselves through amateur production. With the best will in the world, the Arts League of Service cannot hope to visit more than a limited number of English villages in the year, and even the villages which the League contrives to visit cannot get full satisfaction of their dramatic appetite through one visit in the year.

## V THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE.

107. Before we commence our survey of amateur dramatic societies, we desire to draw attention to the very notable work carried on by the British Drama League to which a large number of these societies are affiliated. The League was founded in 1919 by Mr Geoffrey Whitworth, with Lord Howard de Walden as President. The League has the object of assisting the development of the art of the theatre, and of promoting a right relation between the drama and the life of the community. Since that date every effort has been made to federate all the organisations or institutions which practise the art of the theatre from a serious point of view. By its constitution the League is debarred from taking any active part in the production of plays, and it has therefore been able to secure the adherence of other bodies which regard it not as a rival, actual or potential, but as a friend. The League has been successful in affiliating over 700 Societies which range from the humblest village acting group to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

108. The greatest service perhaps which the League has rendered has been the establishment of a dramatic library, which, through the generosity of the Carnegie Trust, is now housed (together with the Offices of the League) in excellent premises at 8, Adelphi Terrace, W.C.2. The new premises were declared open in the spring of 1925 at a meeting at which Lord Eustace Percy, the Minister of Education, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson and Miss Lena Ashwell were among the speakers. This library has been fortunate in obtaining a number of valuable gifts. Miss Horniman has presented the entire series of manuscripts and prompt copies of the plays produced by her during her management of the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester. Recently the library of the late Mr. William Archer was

entrusted to the League, greatly adding to the resources of the library as regards books of a reference character and foreign plays. The library is able to supply on loan any printed play which a member may desire, and for a small fee the complete actors' parts for purposes of production or reading.

109. The League provides assistance to affiliated bodies also by sending lecturers to assist in the formation of local societies, and producers to assist in the production of plays, by maintaining a monthly journal treating the drama as an art, an element in general culture and as a social force, affording also a means of intercommunication between the affiliated societies, by organising the circulation of dresses and stage properties, and by arranging conferences in London and in the provinces at which business of common importance to affiliated societies can be transacted in a way otherwise impossible. Besides these more general activities, the various Committees which deal with specific items in the League's programme have undertaken a wide range of work. The League for instance made possible the International Theatre Exhibition shown first at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, and afterwards in several cities in the North of England, the Historical Exhibit of Theatre Art at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924, and the Exhibition of Community Theatre Art at the Summer Meeting at Oxford in 1925. A similar exhibition was organised in connection with the Annual Conference held at Birmingham in October, 1925. The League also initiated and supervised the competition for architectural designs for a National Theatre. The encouragement of Village Drama is the concern of the League's Community Theatre Committee which now employs a paid secretary. Finally, at the request of the Carnegie Trust, the League has appointed a special Committee to advise the Trust on the applications received by them under their scheme for financial assistance to Repertory Companies of educational standing.

110. The League has rendered particular assistance to amateur societies in regard to copyright plays. Many societies find it impossible to give such plays, since their takings cannot provide the sum necessary for the payment of the author's fee. The League has conducted negotiations with the object of establishing a royalty system of payment in the case of copyright plays, and of regularising the position of play readings in this matter.

111. The work of the British Drama League has also an international aspect. In October, 1925, the League received an invitation from the Committee of the Little Theatre Tournament in New York to send a representative team of British Community Players to take part in the Competition for the David Belasco Cup in May, 1926. Seven English groups entered for the Trial Performances organised by the League, and the Huddersfield Thespians were finally chosen by the "Daily Telegraph," acting on behalf of the League, to represent this country in the United States. Encouraged by the wide interest aroused by this event, the League has planned a Festival of Community Drama to be held annually in London, at which six companies will appear, to be selected at preliminary competitions organised in six defined areas throughout the country.

112. Mr. Harley Granville-Barker, Chairman of the Council, and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, Hon. Secretary, gave evidence on behalf of the League before us. We desire to place on record our appreciation of the assistance which they have constantly given us, and of the hard work and enthusiasm which has made possible the great services of the League to the cause of the drama in this country.

## VI.—AMATEUR SOCIETIES IN THE TOWNS.

*Limitations of Enquiry.*

113. We have explained that we can only give an account of a limited number of amateur societies and that the fact that any society is not mentioned in no way reflects on its reputation. We have endeavoured to collect the views of the societies whose work has been accorded high praise by any of our witnesses. In some cases no replies have been forthcoming, and the exclusion of that society from this record may be ascribed to that cause. We have, however, deliberately excluded from our investigations that type of society to which Mr. Granville-Barker referred in his evidence quoted earlier in our report. "I suspect that the amateur clubs of my youth still go on, and perform out-of-date West End successes, in which feeble imitations are given of the popular favourites who first played in them." We are aware that many of these societies have a long history and that great actors have passed from them to the professional stage. They have however been almost invariably confined to one very limited social grade, and as such can hardly be regarded as having any influence on general popular culture with which we are concerned. Moreover, the performance of West End successes, and the imitation of West End favourites, have been responsible for much of the derision with which the professional theatre, and most of the general public, have been accustomed to regard amateur effort. Many of our witnesses, in particular Sir Barry Jackson and Mr. Nugent Monck, were emphatic that the bane of the amateur movement was its association with the idea of a social function and the inadequate imitation of the West End success. These societies are still very numerous. A number of theatres have at one time or other been devoted to amateur interests alone. Most of these have had a continual procession of plays given by different societies, but one gave opportunities to the individual amateur. Anyone could take part on

payment of a fee, which varied with the importance of the character. The performances at this theatre, as might be expected, were remarkable in character, but not more remarkable, we suspect, than those of many amateur societies, where parts have been allotted, not perhaps on consideration of a money payment, but on consideration of social prestige or some other quality having as little connection with artistic merit. It has been suggested that the fact that great actors have come from such societies entitles them to serious regard. But in considering amateur societies from the educational or social standpoint we are unable to agree either that their object should be to train professional actors or that their success can be gauged by the number of their members who pass on to the professional stage.

114. We have not however disregarded societies which, while performing West End successes, are drawn from many social grades. These societies are often found in connection with Works and Offices. Their object has been to unite the staff in a common enterprise to which all can contribute in accordance with their talents, and when this object has been attained, work of real social importance has clearly been achieved. But clearly work of much greater importance has been achieved in those societies which starting under precisely similar conditions have been successful in combining a co-operative enterprise with a reasonable standard in choice of play.

#### *London.*

115. The dramatic societies in London and the Home Counties are very numerous, and some of them have attained a considerable reputation. The conditions in London however are peculiar and do not provide much guidance in considering the general problem. In the first place London is the headquarters of the professional stage, with a large number of theatres, and although many of these are devoted to musical comedy and others to plays of indifferent quality, there is never that complete absence



of good plays for the satisfaction of the lover of the drama which obtains in hundreds of other towns throughout the year. The need for amateur societies as a means of securing the presentation of good plays, though considerable, is not so urgent as in the provinces. The need is of course much greater in the poorer boroughs, and in outlying districts, and efforts have been made to meet it both by the professional theatre through the "Old Vic," the Lena Ashwell Players, and of late an increasing number of suburban "repertory" theatres, and by amateur societies such as the Mansfield House Players, the Shoreditch Drama Society and the St. Pancras People's Theatre. But in general the object of most dramatic societies in London may be fairly stated as the entertainment of themselves and their friends, and very few societies set out to provide good plays for the benefit of the general community in the manner of the societies in Lancashire, Yorkshire and other areas which we propose to consider in this chapter.

116. The evidence which we have received from London societies will be found in other chapters relating to the various types of institution to which they belong. The work for instance of the Mary Ward Settlement in relation to the St. Pancras People's Theatre, of the Mansfield House Players, and of the London County Council Literary Institutes will be described under "The Drama in Educational Institutions" and many other societies will be mentioned in the chapter which concern the Churches, boys' clubs, and works and offices.

117. A happy recent development in the amateur movement in London is the competition held under the auspices of the British Drama League. The competing societies are drawn from most diverse types of institution, and the standard of acting attained has received high praise from members of the professional stage who have acted as judges. But perhaps the most remarkable feature of the competition has been the high standard in choice of play. Scenes from Shakespeare have been chosen by a substantial

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proportion of the societies; the other scenes chosen have in virtually every case been taken from plays of acknowledged merit. The feeble farce has found no place. We suggest that similar competitions might well be inaugurated in other large centres of population with a view to the encouragement of a high standard in choice of play and production, and we are glad to note that the British Drama League is announcing a scheme for a "National Competition or Festival of Community Drama." Such competitions are held on the Continent; those held by the International Congress of Dramatic and Lyric Art draw competitors from all parts of Belgium, France and Switzerland. It is worthy of note that the Congress of 1925, at Rouen, was held under the patronage of the Minister of Education and Fine Arts.

118. London also presents fewer difficulties in the way of accommodation than most other towns. The New Scala Theatre, and the theatres of the Guildhall School of Music, Cripplegate Institute and other institutions, are occupied almost continuously throughout the year by amateur societies. The problem is naturally greater in the poorer boroughs. Here the provision of "Little Theatres" holding an audience of a few hundreds would be of great service.

### *Yorkshire.*

119. The new amateur movement is particularly strong in the North of England. We have already mentioned the existence of societies partly professional and partly amateur in Yorkshire. Here also the "play of ideas" appears particularly to flourish. Recently three of Shaw's plays, *Back to Methuselah*, *Heartbreak House* and *Androcles and the Lion* could be seen within a few weeks. The credit for the production of *Back to Methuselah* is due to the Sheffield Playgoers. Notwithstanding great difficulties in the way of an inadequate stage, a fine production was given of the cycle, and it is a pleasure to record that this considerable venture was a financial as well as an artistic success. The Playgoers in addition to producing plays which are not

commonly to be seen in the commercial theatre hold a number of play readings each year and have occasional lectures. *Heartbreak House* has also been seen recently in Sheffield under the auspices of the Sheffield Repertory Theatre, which produces a play for one week each month. This society has again every disadvantage in the way of an inadequate stage, but the enthusiasm of the promoters is a sufficient compensation. Sheffield is fortunate in having yet a third society engaged in the production of plays of merit. The Sheffield Educational Settlement has recently produced *Peer Gynt* and *Androcles and the Lion*.

120. The Leeds Art Theatre is partly professional and partly amateur, and has been most fortunate in having a distinguished producer in Miss Edith Craig. It is also fortunate in the possession of a new theatre at the Alexandra Hall in Leeds, which was opened by Sir Barry Jackson in September, 1925. The aim of the Theatre is the presentation of the best in modern literary drama, and it has to its credit the production among other plays of *Philip the King* and *John Gabriel Borkman*. But its most notable production has been that of the Austrian mystery play *The Great World Theatre* at St. Edward's Church, Holbeck, over a period of three weeks. Normally a play is given for seven performances. The programme for the present season includes some new plays and *Cæsar and Cleopatra*.

121. The York Everyman Theatre works on lines very similar to those of the Leeds Art Theatre. Still engaged in the building up of popular support and the pursuit of the necessary financial basis, it cannot afford to spend money too freely, and except for the stage and electrician, and occasionally some special productions up to date are *Everyman* and *The Merchant of Venice*. The programme for the present season includes *Malin*, produced by Mr. [Name], a thirteenth century [Name], and *The Merchant of Venice*, a Morality play in [Name].

122. The Huddersfield Thespians came into being in the result of a private performance of one of Mr. J. R. Gregson's plays, the cast of which became the nucleus of the membership. Its objects are the study of dramatic literature and the production of plays which would not otherwise be seen in the town. Mr. Gregson has put us greatly in his debt by his evidence on many matters under our consideration, and we reproduce in some detail his evidence on the subject of this society, as it throws much light on the difficulties attendant on the production of plays of high quality, and has led us to certain conclusions, which may be disputed, on the relation of amateur societies and the "repertory" theatre.

123. "The members of the society," he said, "numbered 200, and of these 50 might be said to do all the work. They included doctors, teachers from High Schools, officials, clerks, and a substantial number of manual workers. The society was wholly amateur. Every detail in the production, scenery, clothes, electrical work, erection of the stage, etc., was done by people who had already done a day's work. The casting committee (excluding officers) numbered five, and there was a healthy conflict of opinion as to the plays which the society ought to produce. Some were inclined to put their faith in Barrie or Milne. Other members thought that the society ought to do the 'adventurous' plays, and held that such plays would prove popular when they were seen by the public. During the past winter they had produced *Androcles and the Lion*, but before this decision was reached two of the Committee had had to hand in their resignations. It so happened that *Androcles* played to £63, while *The Dyer Road* played to £39, and the society lost money over it. He thought it necessary to effect some compromise between the 'play of ideas' and other plays of a traditionally more popular character. He thought that it was the duty of everyone interested in dramatic education to put on the 'play of ideas' whenever he could. It was most important never to play down to an audience. He found that the public were most



amenable to suggestions if properly put, but if one went outside the plays which probably everyone knew, it was necessary to have publicity."

124. "Mr. Alfred Wareing, the Director of one of the Theatres at Huddersfield, was very anxious to put on the best plays. The 'play of ideas' however could not hope to attract an audience of more than a few hundred and could not fill a Theatre holding 1,200 for a week. Mr. Wareing, however, allowed the Huddersfield Thespians to have the theatre for a week before Christmas at the time when he was rehearsing a Pantomime. The Theatre and the Society went shares in the receipts. On the last 'Theatre Royal' occasion the Society had put on *What Every Woman Knows*. Their greatest success had been *R.U.R.* They had to turn people away and, as a result of this success in their own hall, Mr. Wareing had offered them a week in which to revive this play for three nights and also to produce *The Adding Machine*. In the ordinary way the Society gave its plays in a hall which was quite inadequately equipped. The stage had to be doubled in size, and the scenery had to be kept in place by any device but the usual and easy one. If the Society went outside Huddersfield the difficulties were increased because, in addition to all the work of erecting and transporting the stage and scenery, travelling had also to be taken into account. On the other hand, he thought that it was easier to play in a small hall than in a large theatre. When a 'play of ideas' was being given the atmosphere was more favourable. He had suggested to those concerned that the York Everyman Theatre, Leeds Civic Theatre and Huddersfield Thespians might arrange to exchange plays. Each society would produce two plays and give them in the halls belonging to the other societies."

125. "He thought that the growth of amateur societies was very largely due to the fact that people of intelligence were being starved of the best plays because the commercial

theatre could not afford to put them on. It was unreasonable to blame the managers of the Theatres. They could not afford to put on plays at a loss. There were for instance two theatres and a music hall in Huddersfield. One of the theatres held 1,200. A revue or musical comedy could be relied on to fill the theatre but a 'play of ideas' could not. For this reason he advocated 'Little Theatres' holding 300 to 400 as the only solution of the problem. There might come a time when great plays could be given, entirely on their own merits, to large audiences, but the time was not yet. Huddersfield was an ideal field for the 'Little Theatre' movement. There was a network of small towns each with a considerable civic consciousness and very few cultural opportunities at the moment."

126. "He thought that the 'Little Theatre' must be carried on mainly by amateurs. The 'repertory' theatres, which were compelled to give a new play every fortnight or every week, had great difficulty in making both ends meet, and often had to put on plays of inferior quality in order to make enough money to cover losses on better plays. He thought that intelligent amateurs putting on good plays in the winter were more likely to further the cause of the best drama in the country than 'repertory' theatres. The difficulty was to retain the amateur status under such conditions. The production of a play meant an immense amount of work for all concerned. In particular, the Director had a task which took so much time and energy that it was almost impossible to combine it with any other occupation. To put on one play every few weeks was a great strain on such an amateur Director. To put on three or four in the winter it was essential that he should be paid, so that he could sacrifice either part or whole of his present occupation."

127. We will examine Mr. Gregson's conclusions after giving the views presented to us by other witnesses who have had experience of similar societies.

128. The Leeds Industrial Theatre is a most interesting experiment, inspired by the example of the Rev. Percival Gough, who, finding that some of his workpeople parishioners were interested in drama, encouraged them to study and perform scenes from the plays of Shakespeare. He worked on the theory that drama was most valuable as a means of self-expression, and therefore interfered as little as possible between the play and the players, not even troubling to correct their speech or to tone down their dialect. The scenes were staged in the barest manner.

129. Meanwhile in Leeds, Mr. W. B. Dow, a director of Messrs. Simpson, Fawcett & Co., keenly concerned in the welfare of his employees, had organised a series of lectures on the drama and arranged group visits of his workers to performances of classic plays. He invited Mr. Gough to speak about his players, but Mr. Gough brought his players to speak for themselves. A hall was engaged, a stage improvised, and a programme given. The working-class audience was attracted and roused to imitation. They began forthwith to study and rehearse on their own account.

130. Mr. Dow, at his own expense, erected a more permanent stage and installed a rudimentary lighting system. The rent of the hall was met by a subscription of one penny per week from the worker-actors and audience. But the actors could not fill more than one programme a month, and Mr. Dow to establish continuity and fill up the gaps invited various other amateur dramatic societies to repeat their productions at the Industrial Theatre. The employees of other factories joined in the scheme. A secretary and committee were appointed. The members were formed into groups of fifty persons. Each group appointed someone to collect their pennies and represent them on the committee. But the work of this committee lay principally in the conduct of performances, the direction was left to Mr. Dow.

131. Feeling that the possibilities of the scheme could only be exploited to the full with the aid of technical advice, Mr. Dow, in November 1921, appointed Mr. Gregson as Welfare Coach to his own employees. He began rehearsals of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Diana of Dobsons* with two separate groups of players. Of the cast of *The Merchant* only two had witnessed anything like a full production of a Shakespearean play. None of them had done any acting. Some could not read except with difficulty, and none had the slightest knowledge of stage deportment or elocution. But Mr. Gregson was instructed to regard the whole matter primarily as an educational experiment, and anyone who evinced a desire to take part in a production, whether suitable or not, had to be encouraged. This policy was modified later for certain productions but never abandoned. The stage was improved and the lighting system was overhauled, and the subscription increased to twopence per week.

132. During the next three years a remarkable programme of plays was produced either by the Industrial Players or by visiting amateur dramatic societies. This programme included ten plays of Shakespeare, two of Ibsen (*Peer Gynt* and *The Doll's House*), two of Maeterlinck, one each of Strindberg, Shaw, Galsworthy, Barrie, George Calderon and Cicely Hamilton, Verdi's *Trocatore* and Ethel Smyth's *The Bosun's Ma's*.

133. The Theatre organisation was also used in the arrangement of group visits to witness professional performances of classical plays and operas.

134. The Theatre ran for three seasons. The second was the most successful, when a different play was produced each week, at least two performances of each being given, about 30 plays in all in one winter. Of this second season's programme the Industrial Theatre itself produced about eight. It is much to be regretted that the activities of the Theatre have now been suspended, owing to the loss of the hall, bad trade, which reduced the paying

membership and made it impossible for Mr. Dow to continue his subsidy, and Mr. Gregson's absorption into other work. Mr. Gregson was inclined to think also that the quality of the programme was a little too consistently ahead of the taste of the audience.

135. The Leeds Civic Theatre began work in October 1925. Mr. Charles F. Smith, one of the founders of the Leeds Art Theatre and a present Director of the York Everyman Theatre, conceived the idea of combining the artistic attainment of the Leeds Art Theatre with the larger popular appeal of the Industrial Theatre. He and three other well-known citizens of Leeds have jointly guaranteed the expenses of the experiment. The public manifesto announcing the scheme declares that the founders are actuated by the conviction that drama should be as easily accessible to the poor man as water or sanitation.

136 Mr. Smith is Director and Mr. Gregson has consented to act as Producer. There will be a paid stage manager and electrician. It is the intention to rely in the beginning upon amateur actors, casting a wide net over the whole of Yorkshire for the most suitable persons. The ultimate formation of a semi-professional stock company is contemplated.

137 The first programme includes *Oedipus Rex*, *The Little Plays of St Francis* and *The Adding Machine*. Six performances of each play are contemplated at intervals of about five weeks at the Albert Hall, which seats 800 to 1,000 persons. Admission will be free, but a collection taken to defray expenses. It is hoped to achieve a very high standard of production as regards acting and staging.

138. The Bradford Industrial Theatre did not spring spontaneously from the demands of the workers, as did the Leeds Industrial Theatre, but was suggested by some of the Bradford City Council who paid special visits to the performances of the Leeds Industrial Players and arranged for them to visit Bradford with two or three plays. They

put a large hall at their disposal, bore all the expenses of the visit and made a contribution to their funds. They played *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *T'Marsdens*. Some time after this a public meeting was held under the patronage of the City Council and the scheme was floated. The organisation is in the nature of a confederacy of various societies belonging to different factories, trained by the same producer.

139. The new amateur movement in Yorkshire generally is of the greatest interest from many points of view. It appears to be genuinely democratic, it is associated with industry and has the good-will of many employers, both actors and audience are drawn very largely from the ranks of manual workers, the standard of play given is very high, and the "play of ideas" appears particularly to flourish. The future of the drama in Yorkshire appears full of promise

#### *Lancashire and Cheshire.*

140. The outlook in Lancashire and Cheshire is also of great promise. The Stockport Garrick Society and the Unnamed Society, Manchester, have received high praise from our witnesses. The objects of the Stockport Garrick Society are to give performances of dramatic works, and occasionally of opera and operetta (members as far as possible making the necessary stage equipment); to arrange lectures, recitals, readings, etc.; compile a library of works of the drama and literature bearing on the subject; and generally to foster and further the higher forms and aims of dramatic art and literature. The Society was founded in 1901 and during twenty-four years has consistently upheld a high standard of play and of production. In the first four seasons there were eight productions, five of Shakespeare, two of Sheridan and one Ibsen. In the fifth year there were four plays, including one Shaw. Recently the number of productions has reached as many as fifteen in a year, and many plays written by members of the society have been produced. The Society is

fortunate in having its own Play Rooms. Visits are exchanged with neighbouring societies of a similar nature, and observing the same high standard, such as the Altrineham and Marple Garriek Societies.

141. The Unnamed Society, Manchester, came into being in 1916 and was at first a small, informal group of people who met at each other's houses. In intention it was not at first mainly dramatic; the idea was to collect a membership of painters, craft-workers, musicians, dramatists, and business men to discuss what could best be done to make the art life of Manchester better; in short, its aim was "a more beautiful Manchester." Gradually the dramatic element became the strongest, partly because so many arts can be joined in a dramatic movement. At the present date, however, the Unnamed Society is not wholly devoted to drama. There are fortnightly Meetings at which papers are read and discussions on various subjects take place.

142. The object of the society's dramatic work is to bring into notice hitherto unacted, or rarely acted, good plays, those by young, unknown playwrights, and those by better known authors which are not in general attempted by the commercial managers and producers. Plays by the society's members have been the principal features of many of the programmes. There are three productions in a year, and sometimes a visit is paid to other dramatic groups in the neighbourhood.

143. The society has now more than forty productions to its credit. They have been extremely varied in character. Among the many dramatic forms which have been experimentally treated are a melodrama of the *Grand Guignol* type, a revue, plays dealing with Ancient Greece, and a pantomime, and lately the society has produced an eighteenth century comedy, thus turning its energies in yet another direction. A triple bill of plays has been a frequent feature of the programme.

144. But however different the plays, a certain simple and definite kind of stage-craft, distinguished by the elimination of all non-essential elements and by a constant stressing of whatever appears significant, has been the rule for each production, and it has been found that all forms of drama can be simply and effectively presented. The society makes all its own scenery, properties and costumes.

145. The society is one of those which owe their origin largely to dissatisfaction with the productions of the commercial theatre. Miss D. A. Crose, a representative of the society, stated in evidence:—"In all large cities there are a number of people ready and eager to welcome new experiments in all forms of stage-craft. These people are not frequent playgoers, because the average theatre does not satisfy them, but it is undoubtedly from this source that the ideal development of the drama will come. Three or four enthusiastic people with progressive ideas can generally start a dramatic society without undue difficulty, but, unless they are disposed firmly to adhere to their original ideals, the danger is that the more sophisticated members will insist that the society is only one more vehicle for bad productions of poor plays which can be seen almost any week very much better performed at any local theatre. Under present conditions the amateur group is as a rule the only means most playgoers have of seeing unusual and progressive plays, and consequently the duty of doing pioneer work should never be neglected."

146. There are many other societies doing plays of merit in Lancashire. Mr. Doran of the Manchester Playgoers in evidence expressed the opinion that 75 per cent. of the best work in Lancashire was done by amateurs. He particularly instanced a very fine performance of *Ecryman* given by miners in a Church at Atherton.

*The Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich.*

147. It is in the North of England that many of the most notable experiments have taken place. But very



good work has been done elsewhere, and in particular at Norwich by Mr. Nugent Monck at the Maddermarket Theatre. This society differs from most amateur societies, in that it has a permanent home, a regular programme and a professional producer. On the other hand the company is entirely amateur. Mr. Nugent Monck in giving evidence before us said: "The Norwich Playgoers were founded in 1911 by a few amateurs who were discontented with the type of play given in provincial towns. The society was entirely re-constructed in 1919. In 1921 they had won sufficient success to be able to maintain their own theatre. They bought freehold and adapted, at a total cost of £3,300, a building which had had a varied career. It was situated in the old market for the sale of madder. Hence its name. In the eighteenth century it had been a Roman Catholic church; at a later date a baking-powder factory, and subsequently a centre for the Salvation Army. It was now a theatre."

148. "The Maddermarket Theatre was an exact model of an Elizabethan Theatre. It had an apron stage protruding into the auditorium. He was convinced that this shape of stage was the best for the playing of Shakespeare. The stage was less suited to modern plays, but he found no difficulty in producing them on it. The scenery was permanent, as in the Vieux Colombier Theatre."

149. "A theatre on this model was very cheap to run. There were no stage hands. The only professionals engaged in the business were the charwoman, the electrician and himself. Members of the theatre made the costumes, and simple painted cloths, and other properties. They had learned how to dye for that purpose. The wardrobe was now of good quality. It was insured for £2,000. The music also cost nothing. It was done by amateurs. They had a spinet and a string trio, but he only introduced music into a play when it was absolutely necessary. This was true also of folk dancing. The theatre had modern lighting. All the actors were amateurs, though occasionally a

professional became an amateur for a short period in order to act. They rehearsed for three weeks and gave the play in the fourth week. A production cost, usually, between £40 and £60, of which £20 went in payment of taxes."

150. "It had at one time been suggested that the Players should form a syndicate, but the suggestion was not carried through. He was in sole charge of every detail of every production. He asked nothing less than implicit obedience from all. He invited people to act, and they usually found that it was easier to act than to refuse his invitation. People started as 'associates' and after a time if they won their spurs, they became 'players.' In all the actors numbered about forty. They were all workers, at home or elsewhere, and were drawn from every class of the community. Some of the actors were of the professional class, such as solicitors, and others artisans, clerks and shopkeepers. If they wanted to act they had to come under a very strict discipline. They had to attend punctually at the theatre whenever required. This involved their abandoning any other social life which they were in the habit of enjoying."

151. "He chose the plays himself. He thought that a play should have both an intellectual and a spiritual content, and he particularly affected high comedy. Shakespeare and Sheridan could be guaranteed always to fill the theatre. The two most popular plays in the language were *The School for Scandal* and *Hamlet*. *Twelfth Night* and *The Critic* were also exceedingly popular. Classics were not really dull provided that they were not treated as a sacerdotal rite. A number of societies appeared to regard Shakespeare as an educational force. He thought this horrible. The younger art movements of the day affected to despise Shakespeare. He thought this better perhaps than the more serious enthusiasts who believed in Shakespeare for the people, with a pat on the back both for Shakespeare and for the people. Bernard Shaw had now become popular. He was much enjoyed by the Labour element. Generally he did not think that modern

plays went very well. They were usually played at a loss. He had put on plays by Masefield, Drinkwater, Yeats and other Irish dramatists, but he had to be careful not to put on plays which might appear in Norwich at the commercial theatre. He had given Greek plays, which attracted a somewhat different audience from the usual. The Cathedral people came. The plays given were the *Hippolytus*, *Electra* and *Alceste* in Gilbert Murray's translations. He thought that they had had a good effect in inducing in the audience a sense of style."

152. "The theatre paid its way. He thought it essential to live on the box office as it prevented him from becoming too highbrow. There were no subscriptions, but a few faithful people gave guarantees against ultimate loss. He thought that there were about 500 people who could be relied upon to turn up to every show. The prices charged were 5s., 3s 6d., 2s. 4d., and 1s. 6d. The audience was drawn in the main from the lower middle class, and the cheaper seats were full of the younger generation of artisans."

153. "He thought that the plays had a very great effect on the people who formed the audience. The people who had left the churches came to the Maddermarket Theatre and found some elements of religion there. They found colour, ritual and discipline. To hear verse spoken intelligently was a most moving thing. But it was a difficult task to get people interested in the drama. He thought, however, that a theatre such as the Maddermarket Theatre could be started anywhere. Perhaps a rather larger theatre would be a sounder business. The Maddermarket held 220 in all. He thought that a theatre holding 500 would be easier to run."

154. The list of plays given by the Norwich Players in 1923/24 and 1924/25 includes eight of Shakespeare, one Sheridan, one Shaw, Wycherley's *Gentleman Dancing Master*, *The Liar* by Goldoni, *Abraham Lincoln*, and a new play by a member of his company. The programme for

1925/26 includes *King Lear*, *Measure for Measure*, *Julius Cæsar*, *The Trojan Women*, *Marriage à la Mode* and *Androcles and the Lion*. Mr. Nugent Monck has also given lectures, illustrated by scenes played in costume. There appear to be other activities of the Theatre, as according to Mr. Nugent Monck "with lectures and concerts and art exhibitions the Players get hustled into a good deal of superficial culture."

### *Conclusions as to "Little Theatres."*

155. The societies of which we have so far given an account have mainly represented the general community in large towns, and before we carry our survey any further it may be well to consider whether the evidence given suggests any conclusions which are peculiar to the circumstances of large towns and not of general application. In our account of "repertory" theatres we observed that they were placed in cities with a very large population, that even so their existence was precarious, and that the "repertory" theatre could not therefore be regarded as the means by which the great mass of the people living in smaller centres of population could be brought into touch with good drama.

156. We also expressed the opinion that there was not a sufficient public even in the largest cities for the continuous presentation of the "play of ideas." But the evidence of Mr. Gregson and Mr. Nugent Monck appears to suggest a means by which the problem of the great number of towns, whose population lies between 40,000 and 250,000 inhabitants, can be effectively attacked.

157. A programme of good plays appears to be just possible in the "repertory" theatres of great cities, such as Birmingham and Liverpool, but is clearly impossible in towns with one tenth of their population. Such towns must be content with something less than a new play once a week and a professional company. But they can hope to have a good play, competently acted by amateurs for one week

a month, if they can attract a producer of the type of Mr. Nugent Monck and can find, or build, suitable premises. We think that it is clear from the evidence that such a producer has at least a full-time occupation and must be paid on that understanding. Moreover, although arrangements may occasionally be made for the use of the local theatre, a far more satisfactory arrangement is that the company should have its own theatre, which we will call for purposes of convenience a "Little Theatre," holding an audience of about 400. Such a theatre is necessary for rehearsals during the three weeks prior to the actual production, for all the work on the making of scenery and costumes, and generally as a centre for dramatic studies. A society is always strongest when it has a centre which it can look upon as essentially its own. Moreover a "Little Theatre" provides an intimate atmosphere which is most favourable for delicacy of playing.

158. "Little Theatres" appear to us to be quite essential for the advancement of the drama in the poorer London Boroughs and in urban areas generally. It is, no doubt, a matter of great regret that many of the best plays do not fill big theatres, and cannot be regarded as a commercial proposition by their Managers. But it is unreasonable to blame the Managers for refusing to put on such plays with every prospect of loss. It is better to recognise that the public for the best plays, though growing, is still limited, and that "Little Theatres" are urgently required in order to provide for the needs of this public. In ten years, if the dramatic revival continues at its present pace, if amateur societies doing good plays multiply, the public for the best plays may have become sufficiently numerous to fill big theatres. In the meantime nothing could contribute more to the growth of interest in drama than the provision of "Little Theatres."

159. Some such theatres appear to have been erected by local effort. The Barn Theatre used by the Oxted and Limpsfield Players, which holds an audience of 350, is an

instance. It was at one time a sawmill and was taken down and re-erected as a theatre at a total cost of £4,000, of which £3,000 was for the building and the rest for fittings. It is run as a limited liability company with £1 shares. It is designed for use for any form of entertainment. For the performance of plays there are movable platforms at the back, which can be used for raising the level of seats, and also a small gallery. A substantial revenue is derived from concerts and evening entertainments generally as well as from plays. Mr. Nugent Monck's Norwich Players have also been successful in obtaining their own Theatre at a total cost of £3,300. Beechcroft Settlement has built a Theatre holding 350 for £1,500. The Stockport Garrick Society has its own Play Rooms. On the other hand the Yorkshire Societies have suffered very great embarrassment through the inadequacy of their accommodation and the continual necessity of moving from one temporary home to another. In a very poor neighbourhood such as Shoreditch, where a very plucky effort to give good plays has been made by the Shoreditch Drama Society, the difficulty of getting premises seems quite insuperable.

160 Often the sum of money required is very small. The Barn Theatre, with fittings, cost £4,000, the Maddermarket Theatre £3,300. One of our witnesses said that if he could get £500 he could adapt a hall which would serve admirably for a "Little" Theatre, and that the money could be paid back in three years. He pointed out that if the Theatre was carefully designed it could be used for lectures and concerts, and that if the rooms at the back of the stage were of a reasonable size they could be used for adult classes, art exhibitions and various societies, all of which would yield a substantial revenue. He suggested also that while the local amateur company could only present one play a month, similar amateur companies from other towns could pay visits, and that professional companies giving a first-rate programme, such as the Arts League of Service, could be invited.

161. We entirely concur in these suggestions. The "Little Theatre" would in fact not give so continuous a programme as the "repertory" theatre of a large city, nor attain quite the same standard of acting, but it would provide a substantial programme of good plays and solve the problem of making the best drama available in hundreds of towns which are at present starved. Moreover, suburban areas and the countryside in the neighbourhood of these towns might hope to see occasional good plays through performances by the "Little Theatre" companies in local halls.

162. We consider that no better service could be rendered to the drama than the establishment of a loan fund for the provision of "Little Theatres." The loans need be for a short term only, in no case exceeding ten years. We have no doubt that under such conditions numerous societies of standing would be willing to assume full responsibility for the erection of a "Little Theatre," and for its maintenance throughout the loan period and thereafter on the basis of providing always a high standard of play. The design of the "Little Theatre" might, we think, generally provide for other artistic activities such as concerts and exhibitions which would be a source of revenue. We commend the idea to any Maecenas who is interested in the cause of the drama in England and Wales.

163. We have suggested that the "repertory" theatre on a professional basis is a means of bringing the best drama before the people in great cities, but that for urban areas generally other than great cities the solution lies in a professional producer with an amateur company and a "Little Theatre" such as exists at Norwich. In making these suggestions we have had in mind only the means of bringing masterpieces of dramatic art before the people, and we consider that the measures which we have suggested would be justified on that account alone. But the benefits conferred of course are not confined to the audience. They accrue in much greater measure to the people taking part,

on each other's knees and often on the actual stage. It was not till after the Armistice that civilians could be admitted. Since then plays by Clifford Bax, Lady Margaret Sackville and G. K. Chesterton have been given, but the majority of the plays have been written by the Players themselves. Many Miracle and Mystery plays have been given at the invitation of the City Council; plays by Shakespeare, Sheridan and Gay have been given in the Pump Room or public parks; and a special point is made of eighteenth century work in order to revive an interest in the heritage of Bath. Plays have also been presented in the local theatres when it is necessary to accommodate an audience too large for the "Little Theatre." A company of Child Players drawn from Citizen House gave four plays at the Conference on New Ideals in Education at Stratford-on-Avon.

167. Citizen House is happy in the possession of an extensive wardrobe, made by its members in the studios, and enriched by a fine armoury and wardrobe presented by Lord Howard de Walden. The men specialise on the scenery and have their own studio and carpenter's shop; the women specialise on the making of costumes and have their own design and dressmaking rooms. Great importance is attached to this side of the work. In evidence Miss de Reyes said "Creative hunger is the basis of all the difficulties of to-day. It is a difficult thing to satisfy. People *want to do and to make things*, not merely to learn theoretically. Drama is possibly the highest form of art and of education, because it combines the service of all other arts. A boy discovers his own genius for architecture in the line and design of a scene, a girl her genius for colour and painting in the colour-motif of a scene. Dancing, music, needlework, drawing, painting, principles of lighting, the value of the spoken word are all combined. Many of the Players have had their life-work determined by their Citizen House training. One boy has become a stage electrician, one a poster designer to a Fleet Street firm, two professional dancers, four professional actors, and this



and the rest were, in plain fact, young men and girls in their 'teens or early twenties, who, having worked all day for their living in shop or factory or office, gave their evening leisure to the practice of a beautiful art. On the stage their speech had been clear, round and rich, and so had that of the very children. Off the stage it held a little more of the soft warmth of the West Country. In neither case was it clipped and mean and flat, like much of the English heard on the London stage. And their acting, devoid of tricks, full of character and sincerity, seemed but the flowering of the human life within them."

170. "Further acquaintance with Citizen House, Bath, showed that its 'Little Theatre,' with its attendant crafts of carpentry and painting and costume making, its subsidiary studies of speaking, singing, eurhythmics, and so forth, is the flower of a very sturdy plant of human life, that is rooted (in the basement and ground floor of the house) in the homely soil of card-indexes about poverty, and tickets for soup and treacle pudding, and rises through the floor devoted to play-rooms and class-rooms and lecture-rooms, to break into manifest beauty, either in that long upper room or in the quaintest dandiest little roof-garden theatre that was ever brightened with strong colour and the laughter of young people. How Citizen House came to be is a story not to be told here. Suffice it that in seven years (and four of them war years) a band of ladies had created Citizen House. The original house is one of the most beautiful in all Bath. Wood built it for the Duke of Chandos early in the 18th century; and it has panelled walls everywhere, and a vast oak staircase from ground to attics, powder-closets, several ghosts, windows on which diamond rings have scratched records of old loves and hates, and, in the noble room which is sometimes a drawing-room and sometimes a lecture-room, a 'sun-ray' fireplace which is an antique as famous as Katisha's left shoulder blade. Rescued room by room, from base uses, it forms now the nucleus of a large and growing organization. There is the National Kitchen and restaurants; a little restaurant for school

children ; various play-rooms ; a children's library and play-room where an immense rocking-horse keeps guard over a thousand toys ; lecture-rooms and classrooms, where, through the Workers' Educational Association and other bodies, young and old may learn to know and to think ; dormitories for men ; clubs for women, girls and boys ; a soldiers' pension office—in fact more than can be reckoned without a swimming in the head. In a word, Citizen House is a great unsectarian centre of sociological activity. It unites all the means by which the workers are encouraged to better their physical and intellectual state."

171. "Most important and most characteristic point of all, on all this work—some of it very niggling and laborious—Citizen House impresses its own tone and temper. We who were brought up in comfortable homes and ancient schools and universities can never know how much we owe to the beauty which we drank unconsciously with youthful eyes and ears. The work of Citizen House is built on beauty. It sees in art—and especially the composite art of drama—the unattainable and therefore always alluring ideal of self expression and self-realization. It is beautiful, bright, gay from top to bottom. In the restaurants the furniture and the table-cloths and the over-alls of the staff (they are the uniform of Citizen House) are as dainty as those of any Bond-street teashop. In the children's library the books are not covered with brown paper : children like the bright bindings, and when they are soiled others can be had. Everywhere cheerful, pleasant comfort ; everywhere colours, brightness, beauty, in fabric, picture, and utensil scaling up to the pure art of the theatre and its workshops, where eager youth can find outlet for its creative instinct in making beauty for itself. Many an admirable philanthropic scheme has come to grief for want of just that trust in art and beauty, leading up from honest comfort to spiritual joy. 'Work hard and be earnest,' say many such worthy places. 'Work hard and be glad,' says Citizen House."

## VII. THE DRAMA IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

*Educational Settlements.*

172. The dramatic work in Settlements has assumed considerable importance and certain Settlements have become, as Citizen House, the "Little Theatre" for their town. At Birkenhead, for instance, Beechcroft commenced work some years ago with a Shakespeare pageant. This was succeeded by a pageant of English Literature, and then by an open-air play *Wat Tyler*, and ultimately by another play, *The King's Jury*, in which there were 159 performers. Many other plays have been given ranging from a Nativity play to Dunsany and Shaw. The Settlement has now found it possible to build a theatre, which holds an audience of 350. Expenses are reduced to a minimum as no one is paid for taking part in the performances, and all the dresses, properties, etc., are made by members of the Settlement. Mr. Horace Fleming has given us some most interesting views on the drama arising out of his experiences in this Settlement.

173. "*The wide appeal of the Drama.* The drama is almost universal in its appeal. Many people in whom the suggestion of a tutorial class, a one year class or a course of lectures, awakens no response, are receptive to the idea of play-acting. While the tutorial class method is probably the best yet discovered for the education of those intellectually inclined, the drama provides a means of attracting those whose intellectual powers have not yet been evoked, and these form the great bulk of the people."

174. "The first effect of the drama is the provision of an interest. This itself has intrinsic value, and is of great importance where the student has no intellectual background and comes from social surroundings which are depressing. Once an interest has been aroused it is a comparatively simple matter for the educator to lead the student along its course to a fuller intellectual life. Beginning with the effort of reading something of literary

value, a grounding in the elements of diction and the concentration of mind required to learn his part, the student ceases to be self-conscious, takes his place in the team, and passes on to self-expression, self-discipline and conscious co-operation with others. He finds perhaps for the first time, that he is doing something, is giving out rather than merely receiving impressions from others."

175. "The acting of plays is in itself of value as a form of education, but it is of greater value when the student reaches the stage of looking at life through the windows of a great mind, which he does if the play be a good one. A still higher level is reached when the individuals are creatively interpreting their own parts, and possibly the highest of all when the student attempts to express in authorship the thoughts that are in him."

176. "*The value of Play Reading.* Play reading groups are springing up in large numbers in Great Britain, and as an introduction to literature and language, they are invaluable. Experience shows that with the class of students to which reference has been made, delight in play-reading follows on interest in play-acting. It is here the critical faculties are awakened: from the construction and quality of a play, the discussion tends to become a consideration of the play as an interpretation of life and from that on to a consideration of the drama of human life itself and the individual's own part therein."

177. "The reading of plays translated from foreign languages is of international importance, in that it fosters a knowledge and appreciation of literature other than the student's own. It enables him to weigh the culture of his own country in comparison with others, and to see that each has influenced the other, and that all are local manifestations of the common spirit of humanity."

178. "*The Amateur Theatre as a place of Education.*—When the drama is part of the general educational programme of a community centre, the play may become the

pivot of all kinds of radiating activities, each with its own appeal and the total exhibiting sufficient variety to meet the needs of all individuals. These activities may include stagecraft, handicraft, design, dyeing, historical research, etc. Nor need these be weakling tributaries. With care each can be raised to a high standard of educational value, and can minister to the developing life of the individual."

179. "A further educational result of the community drama is that it aids the breaking down of prejudices. Men and women antipathetic in politics and religion who, under no other circumstances could be induced to co-operate, have been found to work together in a play in the best possible spirit of good comradeship, and have gained that inestimable social virtue of being able to distinguish the man from his political or religious label."

180. "*The Drama as an introduction to other subjects.* Experience shows that the drama is often an excellent gateway to other subjects. Students who, in the first instance, have joined a dramatic class, have been led through dramatic literature to other forms of literature and have found therein a quickened mental curiosity which could only be met by the study of subjects which previously had failed to awaken the least response."

181. The work at Beechcroft has its counterpart in many other Settlements, such as those at Balham; the Folk House, Bristol; Letchworth; Sheffield; and St. Mary's, York.

182. We are indebted to these and to the many other settlements affiliated to the Educational Settlements Association for very full and interesting memoranda on their work.

183. These accounts suggest that their experiences have been very similar to that of Beechcroft, and that Mr. Fleming's views may be regarded as those of Settlement Wardens generally. A very high standard in the choice of plays has been observed by the Settlements. We have

already referred to the production of *Peer Gynt* and other plays at Sheffield. The Folk House has given a Greek play, scenes from Shakespeare and a number of modern plays including three of Dunsany. The most notable production by Letchworth has been a full operatic performance of *Dido and Aeneas*, but a most interesting experiment was made recently in the course of the Annual Settlement Fair, when the students of the Settlement History Class produced a play written by themselves entitled *The Mercer* and representing an episode at a fourteenth century Fair. The play was intended to exhibit the economic and social economy of the middle ages in a palatable form, and included the trial of a Cheapside merchant by the local inhabitants on the charge of "engrossment." Many cases of dramatic production following on the study of literature have come to our knowledge, but no other instance of the drama growing out of and reinforcing the study of industrial history. Balham has given French plays, St. Mary's, York, ranges from Shakespeare to Karel Capek's *R.U.R.* and Anatole France. The Warden of St. Mary's Settlement mentions the happy results attending a performance of *The Merchant of Venice*. One man previously unacquainted with Shakespeare read all the plays through twice, and then enquired whether there were any more.

184. The work in Educational Settlements differs in a marked degree from that of amateur dramatic societies from many points of view. It forms part only of the Settlement activities, there are permanent premises and a warden in charge. Their evidence of the relation of the drama to Adult Education generally is therefore of peculiar interest. In a memorandum submitted by the Educational Settlements Association we are informed that in all the Settlements "Drama is regarded as an essential and valuable part of cultural education. The aim of the Settlements is to bring together all who are endeavouring by educational methods to satisfy the social, intellectual and spiritual needs of the whole local community. In each

of these three respects dramatic art has a definite function to fulfil. Accordingly the Settlement programmes for any term will each be found to contain at least a play-reading circle, a class in dramatic criticism, or a course of lectures dealing in some way with classic or modern plays. Naturally resources vary, and some Settlements are unable to attempt production, except on comparatively rare occasions, while others produce several plays each year and, if they have a hall of their own, serve in effect as "Little Theatres." But even those which at present must needs confine themselves mainly to the reading and discussion of plays have in view the ultimate possibility of producing them. The characteristic of all the work in the Settlements is that the educational (not didactic) value of drama is constantly kept in mind, and that any tendency to separatism on the part of a group of Players is deprecated, the supreme intention being that as far as possible the life of the whole Settlement shall find expression through this channel."

185. "But perhaps the experience of Educational Settlements reveals most fully that the cultural ideals and impulses of adult students include as great a love of the imaginative and artistic as of the sterner and more 'practical' pursuits, and that aesthetic studies and activities have for such students no less value as an intellectual discipline and an inspiration towards fine citizenship than have those subjects which hitherto have been more conventional. Educational Settlements possess the particular advantage that autonomous groups of all kinds meet at a common centre. Thus the ordinary tutorial classes, lecture-courses, adult schools, Labour College classes and so forth are maintained, but groups of students primarily interested in music, drama or other arts also meet there. Interests are shared, and there are facilities for common effort in directions which individual classes or groups could not explore without injuring necessary concentration upon the special type of study for which they were constituted. But above all the warden is there for the express purpose of seeing that no aspect of educational development

is neglected, and to encourage students, if necessary, to consider the claims and the attractions of activities otherwise overlooked, to help them to give adequate expression to their wishes when aroused, to assist in securing the right leadership for new ventures, and in particular to make sure that the same high standard is maintained throughout and to weld the elements of a complete educational programme into the unity of a diversified collegiate life. This must be said in order to explain how the Settlements, owing to the co-operative nature of their constitution, have occupied a position in which experiments of a special kind in the development of drama as part of a specifically educational programme may be made. Their witness is that drama is a natural and inevitable outgrowth of other cultural pursuits and that it is best developed on community lines."

### *Residential Settlements.*

186. The Settlements which we have mentioned have been affiliated to the Educational Settlements Association. Dramatic work is carried on also in many other Settlements which are affiliated to the Residential Settlements Association. The work at the Mary Ward Settlement, in London, for instance, is of great importance and interest. The Settlement is in a very poor neighbourhood, and its members are boys and girls from shops, factories and offices. An account which we have received is of such interest that we quote it in full :—

187. "One of the problems of such places as the Settlement is to provide some form of expression, something that shall be more than mere amusement, that will make people realise life in its manifold forms, recreating and educating at the same time so that they shall develop along intellectual and spiritual lines, as well as the necessary physical ones. This is undoubtedly to be found in some form of art, and it has recently been borne in upon educationalists, and social workers that dramatic art is the form which makes the most popular appeal."



a share in a widespread improvement in the speech of the local schools."

193. "As the plays acted by the Settlement members improved, the keenness of the actors increased, and the audiences developed both numerically and artistically."

194. "Outside societies often provided Saturday entertainments, but with one or two exceptions it was felt that the Settlement would do better to provide its own entertainments. The most notable exception is the Kemble Shakespearean Company which produces a Shakespearean play three times a year and always fills the hall."

195. "The Settlement mixed choir, always very good, also grew more ambitious and embarked on a series of Gilbert and Sullivan operas which reflect great credit on the singers, and draw large and enthusiastic audiences."

196. "There still seemed however a waste of time and space and opportunity in the big hall that cost so much to keep up and stood empty during the daytime when Settlement members were at work, and consequently a series of dramatic clubs and classes for paying students were started. These flourished to such an extent that after three years it now has a large body of men and women studying drama as an art in very many branches, to such good effect, that this year, by means of a combination of the students and the Settlement members, the Mary Ward Settlement Hall has become the St. Pancras People's Theatre, playing three times a week and producing a fresh play weekly at prices from 6d. to 2s. 6d. All these plays will be acted and staged without any paid actors or workers, the only professional being the producer and a very small staff, most of whom have been our students. Scenery, costumes, lighting and acting are all being done by the students and Settlement members, the latter of whom, being mostly engaged in trades, bring to the benefit of art their technical knowledge of carpentry, electricity, etc., and so learn for the first time how nearly akin the mechanic is to the artist when regarded from the highest standpoint."

197. "From these students has also been developed a small body of volunteer producers, working under the professional producer in the development of other Settlement Clubs, such as the Eleanor Club for factory girls, a class for elementary school children, etc."

198. "The Settlement Working Class Dramatic Club was the winner of the competition held for London Clubs in 1924, with a scene from Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* and were runners-up in 1925 with Gilbert Murray's *Andromache*. This later production is a very good example of the wide scope of the work done."

199. "Lectures were given to the actors on Greek Drama and its relation to the theatre of to-day, and the history leading up to the events portrayed in the play. Lectures on history of the drama were also given to other Settlement members from whom the audience is mainly drawn. One of the factory girls from the Greek Dancing class demonstrated Greek gesture; the producer gave elocution lessons and produced the play."

200 "The actors on their own initiative spent Sundays in visiting the Museums and studying costumes, furniture, and poses; and under the leadership of a student everything required in the production even to the water-jars was made by them. The whole production cost only £3, entirely paid by the people themselves. This was pronounced a most artistic production by such an authority as Lewis Casson who judged the competition."

201. The Mansfield House University Settlement, Canning Town, has been fortunate in obtaining municipal support for its dramatic activities. At a public meeting held at the Town Hall in September 1924, at which the Mayor presided, a Committee was formed to co-operate with the Mansfield House Players in a "Municipal Theatre movement." The objects of the movement are "to place before the average audience the best works of the world's greater dramatists." The plays produced during the first season were Galsworthy's *Strife*, Shakespeare's *Merry*

*Wives of Windsor*, Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Tolstoi's *Michael*, Tchekov's *The Proposal*, and Anatole France's *The Dumb Wife*. The first performance of *Strife* attracted an audience of 750. This contrasted most favourably with the average audience of 120, which had attended before the Players obtained municipal support. *The Merry Wives* was given to an audience of 800, and a special performance was given for school children. This year arrangements have been made for special performances of *St. Joan* and *Oliver Cromwell* for children. The East Ham Corporation grants the use of the Town Hall at a nominal fee, and has refurnished the Large Hall to add to the comfort of the audiences.

202. Another Settlement, affiliated to the Residential Settlements Association, which has a strong dramatic side is the David Lewis Club, Liverpool. The Club is fortunate in the possession of a theatre seating 700 in which from October to April a weekly performance is given by a local amateur dramatic society for the benefit of the working people in the neighbourhood, the charges ranging from 3d. to 1s. 2d. On other days the theatre is let to dramatic and operatic societies of which there are many in Liverpool. The chief dramatic society of the club is the David Lewis Players, but there are several junior groups, and one of lads and girls between the ages of 17 and 21, which lately produced *As You Like It*. The Club has also embarked on a programme of modern and British operas, which include *The Bosun's Mate* and *The Immortal Hour*.

#### *The National Adult School Union.*

203. There are bodies other than Settlements which have the advantages generally of a permanent headquarters and of association with other educational work. The National Adult School Union affiliates some 1,360 Adult Schools in England, together with a small number in Scotland and Wales. These Schools carry on widely varied programmes of educational, religious, recreational,

and social service work. We give below some passages from the evidence submitted by the Union. It is stated that "when, towards the end of the war period, the National Adult School Union was considering a reconstruction of its programme of work, it was agreed to give an increasingly large place to efforts to promote dramatic work in Adult Schools. This decision was made because the Council was convinced of the high educational value of such work, and experience had shown that dramatic work had great value in promoting individual self-control and expression, in developing latent artistic ability, in speech training, in kindling a love of good literature, and in fostering that happy association between individuals which may be described as the team-spirit or community-spirit."

204. "Adult School membership (total approximately 50,000) includes men and women of widely different social position, professions, occupation, etc., as well as age periods. The majority of the members are, however, of the working class, and therefore, the bulk of the dramatic work done in connection with Adult Schools has been for and by those who ordinarily have had little or no opportunity to cultivate their aesthetic interest and potentialities. In view of these facts it is interesting to note that whereas it is nearly always necessary to start on simple lines, there is often rapid progress in desire and capacity to undertake more ambitious work. Moreover, it has been found that in many cases Morality plays or those dealing more or less directly with economic or social problems make a strong appeal to beginners, though frequently this desire for the didactic rapidly gives place to broader aesthetic interests. It has also to be noted that for many younger beginners comedy makes the initial appeal, and plays of this character are popular with the amateurs' audiences."

205. "An attempt has recently been made to secure from all Adult Schools in the country returns as to their various activities. Owing to the difficulties inherent in a movement which is entirely dependent on voluntary

service, this effort has not met with complete success, and it is therefore not possible to state fully what are the dramatic activities that are being carried on throughout the Adult School Movement. Particulars have so far been received from 936 Adult Schools, and an examination of returns in these cases show that Schools in 128 centres are carrying on dramatic work of some sort. The character of the work done varies greatly, in some places being of a very simple character, but in certain cases reaching a high standard of acting, production, costuming, and even of play-writing."

206 The Union encourages the work through its magazine "One and All," and by various publications, including "Community Playing" and by a series of "Little Plays." One of these plays has run into three editions, numbering 11,000 copies, which is an indication of the widespread interest of the Schools in dramatic work. The London Adult School Union has moreover arranged for some years dramatic festivals, and it is hoped to initiate similar festivals elsewhere. Summer Schools have also been organised. These festivals and schools appear to us to be a particularly happy development. Other activities have been lectures illustrated by scenes from selected plays given at week-end Schools held at the Union's Guest Houses and elsewhere. Sunday evening performances of religious plays, assistance in the production of such a play by the women prisoners at Walton Gaol, and a Correspondence Course on Dramatic work carried on in conjunction with the Y.M.C.A. The most notable dramatic work in the movement has been carried on at the West End Adult School, Leicester, which is fortunate in possessing admirable premises. All work in the way of costumes and scenery is done in the School, and a large wardrobe has been built up. The work began before the War, when *The School for Scandal*, *The Rivals* and other plays were given. After the War a *Pageant of Old Leicester* was staged for a week, with 80 to 100 members all in mediaeval costume. The work since has included a number of pageants and

masques, Shakespeare plays, an Ibsen, and some more modern. A point of special interest about this society is the manner in which it has succeeded in enlisting the services of a large number of members for handicraft work in stage-fitting and costuming. Not only are practically all the costumes made by members of the group, but a valuable stock of metal work, of mediaeval armour, and of riding and high boots has been built up. In the last-named instance success has largely been due to the fact that workers in the local boot and shoe trade have found in this dramatic work an opportunity for the expression of their special trade knowledge.

207. Mr. Peverett, of the National Adult School Union, has sent us some interesting notes on play-reading (as distinct from production) to which he attaches great importance. "I would like," he says, "to emphasise the special value of play-reading in connection with the work of dramatic groups, for the following reasons :—

- (a) Its general educational value for those intimately concerned with production.
- (b) Its value as a preliminary method for interesting recruits and in preparing them for dramatic work at a later date.
- (c) The value of having in connection with a group of players a larger body of associated members, who, although they may never be able to proceed to any share in the actual work of production, form a sympathetic group round producers and players, and who thereby help to maintain a high standard.
- (d) The value of play-reading for study groups, classes, etc., not necessarily related to the work of production. The multiplication of such groups and classes should contribute towards the creation of a constituency which will command a high standard of dramatic production, both by amateurs and professionals."

205. With these views we find ourselves in general agreement. While we think that the study of good plays can best be undertaken by actual participation in dramatic production, we recognise that play-reading groups can cover a wide field of drama during the year, and that they form a body of educated opinion which is of great assistance in commanding a high standard in choice of play by the institutions to which they belong.

### *The Y.M.C.A.*

209. The Y.M.C.A. is also fortunate in that the clubs have often premises in which the production of plays is possible. For some years dramatic work has been a regular feature in the educational activities of many of the clubs, and since 1919 the Educational Department at Headquarters has maintained a special Music and Dramatic Section to assist in its extension and development. This Section is in touch with dramatic groups at 36 senior centres and ten boys' centres. At the former the type of play varies greatly, and in many cases a beginning is made with light sketches. But many plays of real merit have been performed, and in a list submitted we find a Greek play, Shakespeare, Sheridan, Shaw and Galsworthy. At the boys' centres the dramatic work is mainly the production of Shakespeare either in selected scenes or of whole plays. The production of plays appears to arouse considerable enthusiasm if we may judge from passages in some evidence submitted regarding the work organised at the Plaistow Red Triangle Club during the past four years. "On one occasion when a stage had to be erected in the 'Gym,' six men worked through the night to get it up." At this centre Miss Margaret Omar has "systematically cultivated interest in the drama by a long series of dramatic readings. The problem of a permanent Hall for production was overcome by covering in the Club's swimming pool during the winter months."

*The Workers' Educational Association.*

210. The amateur dramatic societies connected with the Association are limited in number. A contributory cause no doubt is that the local centres are rarely so fortunate as to have permanent premises, and the Association is naturally preoccupied with the very large organisation of classes which it has brought into being. Of late, however, there has been an increasing number of classes which study the literature of the drama and in a few cases these classes have passed from studying the drama to the production of plays.

211. The classes have sometimes been organised in conjunction with the Universities through University Joint Committees for Tutorial Classes and sometimes independently by the Association. We are indebted to a number of Tutors of these classes for an account of their experiences. Mr. R. H. Coats has taken classes covering a period of three years in Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Drama on behalf of Birmingham University. His method is to devote three quarters of an hour to a lecture on a selected play, followed by a reading of scenes from the play for half an hour by members of the class. The remaining three quarters of an hour is devoted to discussion. Each play in the course of study is assigned, several weeks beforehand, to one of the four or five groups into which the class is divided. Each group thoroughly studies the play allotted to it, and assigns to its own members the several parts of the scenes to be read in class. Sometimes these scenes will be previously rehearsed together by the group in private. Since not all students can read all the plays, this method ensures that each student shall have a knowledge of a few plays rather than a superficial acquaintance with many. Students who have read carefully the play assigned to their own group are naturally quite free to study also such plays of other groups as they have time to read.

212. After each play has been studied and discussed, questions suggested by it form the subjects of home written



work, or essays, which each student is expected to contribute during the session.

213. Mr. Coats encourages his students also to attend performances of good plays at the theatre, which subsequently form subjects for discussion in class. The students in one of his classes have continued their work by the production of plays on their own account, including two plays written by a member of the class.

214. A number of other classes have also terminated in the production of plays. The Manchester and Salford Branch of the Association has for instance essayed the production of one of Molière's plays and of a Bjornson play never before produced in England. But the most remarkable instance of this is undoubtedly Miss Marjorie West's class at Woking. This class began the study of dramatic literature with the Greeks, and the first few lectures dealt with the state of Greece before Aeschylus. These lectures were given in order to provide the students with the necessary background to enable them to understand the conditions under which the great Greek drama arose. In other lectures she touched on Greek philosophy, and in particular Plato. It was originally intended to study Greek drama for one year, but the class became so interested that they asked to continue with the Greeks through two years. Mediaeval and Elizabethan drama were in consequence not reached until the third year, and modern drama not at all. The plays were read in class, parts being allotted to the students. The class was supposed to meet once a week, but in the second year the students desired to act a Greek play, and in the result they spent a considerable part of the week in work connected with the class. Most of the class always met on Tuesday, as well as on Friday, the official day of the class, and rehearsals also took place on Thursdays and Saturdays. Preparations were made for the production, a music teacher training the chorus in Mendelssohn's music and curhythmic dances, while members of the class went to the British Museum to study the

sculpture with a view to costumes and poses. A performance was then given at the Woking theatre and was so successful that it was repeated at the "Old Vic."

215. Miss West has since had a class at Croydon drawn from the Co-operative Society. They began with five of the Aeschylus plays and then moved on to *Abraham Lincoln* and *Justice*. They then returned to the Greeks, finding them more interesting and on a bigger scale. This class also has embarked on the production of a play.

216 Miss West attaches the greatest importance to the combination of class and play production. She considers that the class gives the students the necessary background of history and dramatic theory. The production of a play however forms in her opinion an essential element. In her evidence before us she was emphatic on the point. "In producing a play" she said "by one of the great masters all the actors are obliged to steep themselves body and soul in the creation of a master mind. They must think his thoughts, speak with his lips, and move at his will. To be successful, their own personality must be merged in the part they are creating upon the stage. If that part is a great one the permanent value of the effect upon their own outlook in life is abundantly plain. Nothing is more capable of widening the sympathies and of humanising the character. That this result is not appreciated at its full worth is due to the fact that our national system of education is too narrowly intellectual and material, and does not sufficiently aim at the elevation, training and discipline of that supremely important sphere—the emotions. It was for its influence in training the emotions that the drama was consciously valued by the ancient Greeks and unconsciously by the mediaeval church."

217. "Besides its capacity to widen the sympathies and elevate the emotional side of life, the intellectual value of learning by heart one of the great plays of Sophocles or Shakespeare, to try to recite it well and to hear adequately spoken by others some of the most sublime poetry and

work, or essays, which each student is expected to contribute during the session.

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sculpture with a view to costumes and poses. A performance was then given at the Woking theatre and was so successful that it was repeated at the "Old Vic."

215. Miss West has since had a class at Croydon drawn from the Co-operative Society. They began with five of the Aeschylus plays and then moved on to *Abraham Lincoln* and *Justice*. They then returned to the Greeks, finding them more interesting and on a bigger scale. This class also has embarked on the production of a play.

216. Miss West attaches the greatest importance to the combination of class and play production. She considers that the class gives the students the necessary background of history and dramatic theory. The production of a play however forms in her opinion an essential element. In her evidence before us she was emphatic on the point. "In producing a play" she said "by one of the great masters all the actors are obliged to steep themselves body and soul in the creation of a master mind. They must think his thoughts, speak with his lips, and move at his will. To be successful, their own personality must be merged in the part they are creating upon the stage. If that part is a great one the permanent value of the effect upon their own outlook in life is abundantly plain. Nothing is more capable of widening the sympathies and of humanising the character. That this result is not appreciated at its full worth is due to the fact that our national system of education is too narrowly intellectual and material, and does not sufficiently aim at the elevation, training and discipline of that supremely important sphere—the emotions. It was for its influence in training the emotions that the drama was consciously valued by the ancient Greeks and unconsciously by the mediaeval church."

217. "Besides its capacity to widen the sympathies and elevate the emotional side of life, the intellectual value of learning by heart one of the great plays of Sophocles or Shakespeare, to try to recite it well and to hear adequately spoken by others some of the most sublime poetry and

some Extension Courses are in the nature of lectures unaccompanied by class teaching. Different methods of teaching are therefore not infrequently required, and play production is hardly feasible. But it is of interest to note that this has not interfered with the popularity of courses on the drama. Professor Allardyce Nicoll has been good enough to supply us with an account of the methods which he has employed.

222. "In class I have tried several methods of dealing with the drama, and from experience, I am firmly convinced that the following is the best method to adopt. I shall outline the main features under separate headings. Instead of treating the drama chronologically and from the point of view of one nation, endeavours should be made to make, as it were, cross-sections of dramatic activity. Thus, to take an example, comedy may be the subject chosen for treatment. Instead of dealing with Greene, Lyly, Jonson, Shakespeare, etc., in chronological order, an effort should be made to analyse the different types of comedy and then to treat those types organically. Thus, Terence, Plautus, Jonson, Molière, Shadwell could be considered together. Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, Sheridan, Shaw and Greene; Lyly, Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Barrie might form two other groups, an effort being made to define with more or less accuracy the meaning of terms such as 'Comedy of Humours,' 'Comedy of Manners' and 'Romantic Comedy.' The groups, of course, are not water-tight compartments, and merge into one another, but this I have found the most interesting and the most profitable method of dealing with the subject. It is always useful to bring in ancient and continental drama, and it helps to fire the interest of a class if questions involving comparative criticism are set in essays and tests."

223. "At the same time, the students ought to be encouraged to consider the more abstract problems connected with the various types they are studying. Thus, the nature of satirical literature in general might be dealt

with in connection with the plays of Jonson, and questions might be asked concerning the ultimate object of the satirist. So, too, the words 'wit' and 'humour' should be analysed, and examples of the use of both sought for in literature generally. Finally the students might be asked to consider the sources of laughter itself and to enter into the problem of the relationship between the comic spirit and laughter."

224. "The plays selected for special study should always be treated as plays. It is of no use considering them as one would consider poems or novels. That is to say, the class must be constantly reminded that a full appreciation of these works can be obtained only if the theatre for which they were written is visualised. Thus, study of the text should go alongside study of the theatre, preferably accompanied by illustrative designs or lantern slides, and the student should be asked to account for differences of treatment (e.g. in Aristophanes, Shakespeare and Bjornson) with reference to classical, Elizabethan and modern theatres. A particular study should be made of dramatic technique, and the construction of the plays selected for special reading should be analysed in detail. For such masterpieces as the tragedies of Shakespeare, I have found that the best method is to outline the story of the play as Shakespeare read it in Bandello, Plutarch or Holinshed, try to estimate what Shakespeare must have seen in that story, guess at the difficulties that faced him, analyse his omissions and additions, and finally deal with his play *as a play* from the point of view of (i) characterisation and (ii) structure, watching how the one inevitably influences the other."

225. "It is exceedingly profitable, in taking a class through one of these courses, to take dramatic criticism into account. An outline of the development of this criticism may well be given before the plays are actually brought into focus. Here again it is preferable to make cross-sections at particular points (e.g. at the problem of the

Unities) rather than to plough wearily onwards from Aristotle to Henry Arthur Jones in chronological sequence. I have always found interest aroused when the modern drama is dealt with alongside older drama, and the greatest interest of all is generally evoked when a comparison is made between, let us say, the 'tragic idea' in Galsworthy and the 'tragic idea' in Heywood. Students find it, in my opinion, useful thus to survey the concrete and the abstract relating both to the history and development of dramatic theory."

226. In general we consider that the evidence of the Workers' Educational Association and the University Extension movement demonstrates that courses in the drama are of the greatest service in bringing students into touch with the high intellectual content of great dramatic masterpieces, and in providing a background of history and theory for persons taking part in the production of a play which greatly adds to the educational benefits derived from other elements in play production. In the union of serious study under class conditions with the subsequent production of the plays studied we find drama at its highest as an instrument of education. We strongly recommend to the Universities and other bodies engaged in Adult Education, and to Local Education Authorities, the promotion of classes in the literature of the drama.

#### *Local Education Authorities.*

227. One of the most happy instances of the growth of dramatic production side by side with other educational work lies in the evening institutes of the London County Council to whose remarkable work we have had occasion to refer in a previous report. We are informed that "in all branches of its educational work the Council has found the performance of plays to have a stimulating and tonic influence." Performances are encouraged in elementary, secondary and junior technical schools, and we are invited to remember that "these, as in the schools of the Renaissance period, foster and train the love of acting and of

the stage which afterwards feeds the movement for drama in adult education."

228. The Council has arranged for special performances at the "Old Vic" for children from their schools, as an integral part of their school education. Attention is also paid to the drama in the Council's Training Colleges. During the last few years the staff and students of Avery Hill Training College, Eltham, have produced (partly in connection with courses in early drama for I. C. C. teachers), a successful series of revivals of Mediaeval and Tudor plays, including *The Nativity Scenes* from the Chester Cycle, *Everyman* and *Ralph Roister Doister*. The Furzedown Training College, in addition to modern plays has produced the Tudor interlude, *Jacob and Esau*, *Much Ado about Nothing* and *The Way of the World*. The old students of Greystoke Place Training College have a dramatic society, which revives annually Elizabethan or other standard plays. The training in elocution and gesture which these performances give is in the opinion of the Council not only very valuable to the actors for their work as teachers, but fits them to take part in the general dramatic movement in adult education.

229. Mention may also briefly be made of the fact that the Council's classes for teachers have included lecture-recitals from Shakespeare by Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, and from Euripides, in Professor Murray's translations, by Miss Sybil Thorndike; and lectures on dramatic subjects by Sir Sidney Lee, Sir Israel Gollancz, Professor Gilbert Murray, the late Mr. William Archer, Mr. James Agate, Mr. Kenneth Barnes and Miss Lena Ashwell. The large audiences of teachers of all types that these have attracted testify to the width and intensity of the interest in drama in the educational world.

230. In the evening institutes the plays are usually given by members of the dramatic literature and elocution or literature classes, and are thus an organic part of the educational work of the institute. The instructors of



these classes, who are usually the producers of the plays, have to be on the appropriate Council panel, and have to give evidence not only of gifts for training students in elocution and diction, but of knowledge of dramatic literature and its historical development in this country.

231. In nearly every case students in dramatic classes are definitely encouraged to attend other classes, and in practice it appears that even if they join the institute with the object of attending a dramatic class, they are not infrequently drawn into classes in other arts and handicrafts with the object of helping forward the production of a play.

232. It has been found that the dramatic performances stimulate the teaching of handicrafts, music, dancing and other arts. The production of a play often represents a co-operative effort between members of dramatic classes and members of other classes concerned with the ancillary arts. In the whole-time institutions of the Council such as training colleges and secondary schools the relation between the dramatic performances and the teaching of the ancillary arts is still closer. The music and dancing incidental to the plays are under the direction of the lecturers or masters and mistresses concerned with the teaching of these, and the costumes, scenery and properties are nearly always devised by the members of the staff responsible for the teaching of art and handicrafts. The Council observe in this connection that "it is one of the beneficial features of the dramatic movement that it asks for so much co-operative effort."

233. We were supplied by the Council with evidence from twenty-six of their Evening Institutes. Of these ten were Literary, six Commercial, and six Women's.

234. The Literary Institutes confine their attention to the subjects of a liberal education, and dramatic work might reasonably be expected there. It is more remarkable that it should be so strong in other Institutes where the motive of the student in joining is vocational. It is reasonable to

conclude that dramatic classes represent an admirable means for developing an interest in liberal education in students whose interests have hitherto been vocational.

235. The standard of plays performed is very high throughout the Institutes. There is a tendency to concentrate on the classics and in some Institutes Shakespeare alone finds a place. But in most Institutes the plays given range over the whole field of English drama, and include some of the best modern plays.

236. It is of great interest to find a Dramatic Society in connection with the School of Arts and Crafts at Camberwell. The Society naturally makes its properties and scenery, and we have no doubt that this circumstance adds greatly to the interest of the regular artistic work while a wider field of interest is brought before the students through the intellectual content of the play.

237. At the Mary Ward Settlement, whose dramatic societies carried on in connection with the general educational work of the Settlement we have described in earlier paragraphs, there is also a Dramatic Art Centre which is of the greatest service in providing special training for the teachers who are engaged in furthering the London County Council's Scheme for encouraging dramatic studies in their schools. We have received an account of the work from which we quote a few passages :—

238. "When the report of the Committee on the Teaching of English in the Schools was published, in which dramatic work became practically compulsory for all teachers of English subjects, it was immediately realised here that there would be very many teachers, especially in the elementary schools, who would have next to no knowledge of this subject. It was felt by some of us interested in educational work that dramatic art was a more technical subject than the large majority of people realised, and whilst capable of being of the highest educational value if properly understood, it could be positively the reverse of educational if not properly used. A survey of the work

already going on seemed to show little opportunity for teachers who could spare but a short time for the study of a subject comparatively new to them. This applied particularly to teachers who specialise in English or who teach general subjects."

239. "In order to ascertain what the teachers themselves felt, the Warden of this Settlement invited Miss Maude Scott to come and give an experimental course of lectures on the subject to elementary school teachers in the Borough of St. Pancras. Miss Scott was specially suited for this work, having been originally a teacher trained in the L.C.C. schools, which she left to take up professional acting and play producing. She had the advantage of studying these subjects in America as well as in other countries, where the dramatic work from an educational standpoint was already introduced. One hundred teachers took advantage of this course of lectures, for which they paid a purely nominal fee. They included teachers from all departments, many head teachers, both men and women, also attending. They were exceedingly enthusiastic over the lectures because of their practical side. Their object was first to show wherein lay the true value of dramatic art as an educational subject, and to give a summary of practical knowledge which would enable the teachers to carry on the work with due relation to other subjects of the school curriculum. The lectures are still repeated in alternate terms for the benefit of any teachers who are able to attend."

240. "The enthusiasm awakened by this course led to the formation of special classes in Elocution, Acting, Play Producing, etc. Instruction is available in Elocution, Acting, Play-Writing and Dramatisation, Play Producing, Stage Craft, Dancing, Fencing, etc., and there is a series of Demonstration Classes with children. These classes are arranged at a time specially suited to teachers already engaged in teaching, whenever possible, and are very largely patronised by teachers from both Elementary and secondary schools."

241. "Last term a course of lectures on 'Shakespeare in the Schools' was given to a small body of teachers by Mr. Ben Greet, and this course is always on the prospectus as open if sufficient numbers apply. In the absence of Mr. Greet on tour, Miss Scott undertakes the course."

242. The Dramatic Art Centre also conducts Summer Schools and other activities. We make some reference to these Schools in a later chapter. In the meantime we desire to observe that a scheme for the training of teachers in the dramatic art on the lines of the scheme which we have just outlined is a necessary adjunct to any attempt by a Local Education Authority to further the recommendation in the Report on the Teaching of English in England that "the reading and acting of plays should be encouraged in schools of all types and in Training Colleges."

243. The London County Council is also the pioneer in instituting a scheme of scholarships at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. In congratulating the Council on this step and on their many other activities in the furtherance of dramatic studies, it would be ungracious not to mention the long and devoted services of the Rev. Stewart Headlam in this cause.

244. Other Local Education Authorities have also taken steps to encourage dramatic activities. We have received some information with regard to the work of the Middlesex and Cambridgeshire Authorities. We note with interest in the Cambridgeshire handbook "Further Education for the Countryside" the following passage "The reading and the production of plays will be found to be the most effective way of improving the standard of spoken English."

*Conclusions in regard to Local Education Authorities.*

245. In making recommendations on the part which Local Education Authorities can play in furthering Education through the drama, we are deeply indebted to the evidence of the London County Council.

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#### *Conclusions in regard to Local Education Authorities.*

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246. The measures which we suggest have in most cases been definitely undertaken by the Council and carried through to success. Their practicability is therefore not in doubt.

247. We start with a conclusion for which we have the high authority of the Report on the Teaching of English in England.

(i) The reading and acting of plays should be encouraged in Schools of all types, including Evening Institutes.

(ii) As regards both adolescents and adults dramatic studies can be most happily associated with other humane studies in special Literary Institutes. The example of the London County Council in promoting such Institutes might with advantage be followed by other Local Education Authorities. It is also suggested that Authorities might contribute to institutions having a similar purpose conducted by voluntary organisations.

(iii) Visits to the theatre for the purpose of seeing classic and other plays connected with the course of study undertaken should be in every way encouraged. We are glad to know that the Board of Education has made regulations which enable such visits to be made, and the attendances to be recorded under certain conditions, not only in connection with elementary schools but also in connection with classes for adults.

(iv) Where the local theatre does not provide performances of classic and other plays connected with the course of study, the services of amateur societies might be utilised. Some amateur societies already co-operate with local schools. The Oued and Limpsfield Players for instance always attempt to give plays which are being studied in the schools, and this practice is much to be encouraged. It would be not unreasonable for the Local Education Authority in such circumstances to make some contribution for services rendered. An Authority might also render great service to amateur societies by the loan of rooms for

rehearsal and other purposes connected with the production of good plays.

(v) It is worth consideration whether in the case of new schools the hall might not be designed so as to enable plays to be produced in it. We understand that there is no difficulty in designing a hall which can be used for all the usual school purposes and for play production as well.

(vi) In order that the dramatic studies in schools and evening institutes may be carried on to the best advantage, we consider it desirable that courses for teachers should be instituted at a special centre on the lines of those at the Mary Ward Dramatic Art Centre. The extent of the Local Education Authority's responsibilities would dictate the nature of the centre. One authority might find it desirable to have on its staff a Director of dramatic studies to give courses in the various subjects ancillary to play production and to supervise the dramatic work in the schools and evening institutes generally. Another authority, representing a small area, would no doubt be content with providing occasional courses for teachers, or with enabling teachers to attend courses at other schools, and in particular Summer Schools.

(vii) A Local Education Authority might reasonably give scholarships to enable teachers to attend full-time at Schools of Dramatic Art such as those in London recognised for the purposes of the University of London Diploma. Scholarships might also be awarded at those schools to persons other than teachers, or intending teachers, on the lines of those offered by the London County Council which are tenable at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

### *Schools.*

248. We regret that since our terms of reference are confined to Adult Education, we cannot include within our survey any account of the widespread development of drama as an educational activity in elementary, secondary and other schools in recent years. An account will however



be found in paragraphs 284 to 296 of the Report on the Teaching of English in England, and some remarkable evidence in the addresses given at the Conference on New Ideals in Education in April, 1922. One piece of evidence however we cannot forbear to quote, since it concerns the audience. Mr. Sharwood Smith, of Newbury Grammar School, said "Practically every year we give a performance of Shakespeare, and a Greek play in the summer term, usually one of the beautiful translations of Euripides by Gilbert Murray. I have found the Greek play very valuable in correcting the over-sentimentality so common to-day. There is something in the austerity, the statuesqueness of the Greek play, and its beautiful convention of the chorus that carries an extraordinary appeal not only to the boys but to the people who come to see us do it. Our audience is drawn from all sorts and conditions of people. The poor people in the neighbourhood, for instance, would not miss a Greek play for worlds." Mr. Sharwood Smith supported this assertion by the story of a cook who was unable to take up her duties on a Wednesday because she was going to the "*Bacchae*."

### *The Universities.*

249. Turning now from schools to the Universities we find there a very different attitude towards the drama. In schools throughout the country drama is regarded as an educational activity and holds an honoured place in the curriculum. In the Universities generally drama holds no such place. Notable exceptions are the Universities of Liverpool, which has a lectureship in the Art of the Theatre, and of London. At King's College special classes attended by teachers have been held in the evening for twenty years. Lately moreover there have been two developments of the first importance, the institution by the University of a Diploma in Dramatic Art, and the inauguration of a School of Dramatic Study and Research at East London College. But, speaking generally, the works of the greatest dramatists are studied in the Universities from an antiquarian,

philological or purely literary standpoint, and not in relation to the art of the theatre for which they were written. We consider this a matter of great regret. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* declares that there is no such thing as literary drama. Mr. Granville-Barker also was emphatic on this point at the Conference on New Ideals in Education. "I ask you to bear in mind the essential integrity of the theatre. The drama is a fine art, and its educational use will ultimately depend upon the cultivation of the art for its own sake in the conditions that are proper and peculiar to it. And I naturally think not only of the use the art of drama may be to education, but of how the great art of the theatre may be better cultivated by making its understanding and appreciation a part of education." The Report on the Teaching of English in England suggested that lectureships on the art of the theatre similar to that established at Liverpool might well be established at other Universities. We have no hesitation in endorsing this suggestion, believing that the art of the theatre in itself is a study worthy to take its place among the other humane studies of a University, and that a knowledge of the art of the theatre is essential for the full appreciation of the work of the great dramatists which necessarily forms an important part of the study of literature.

250. A great step forward has however been taken since the publication of the English Report through the institution by the University of London of a Diploma in Dramatic Art. The Regulations require the candidate to undergo a course of training in Dramatic Art with special reference to speech and movement, together with the literary and scientific studies appropriate to such training. The course of study extends over at least two years and must be taken at an approved institution. On entering for examination the candidate is required to submit a certificate from the institution that he has attended :—

(1) A two-year practical course, including (a) Use and Management of the Voice, (b) Phonetics, (c) Diction,

(d) Movement (including the Art of the Dance), (e) Acting ;  
and

(ii) A two-year course including :—

(a) The general principles of English Poetics, with a special study of selected poems ;

(b) General outlines of the History of the Drama, Shakespeare, and selected plays ;

(c) One modern foreign language, with special study of selected plays ;

together with any one of the following :—

(d) History of Theatrical Art; with special reference to social life, manners, customs, costume ;

(e) Elements of Appreciation of Music ;

(f) Elements of Physics as applied to stage-craft.

251. The University appoints Assessors to be present at dramatic and oral tests as regards (i) and holds an examination as regards (ii). The normal two years' course may be followed in a third year, in the case of those who have completed the course successfully, by a supplementary course specially suited to the requirements of teachers: this includes further work in Phonetics; Theory and Practice of Voice Training; Elementary Anatomy, Physiology, and Psychology, as applied to movement, voice and speech; teaching under supervision; Speech Training and Remedial Work; and Stage Direction. We understand that the institutions hitherto recognised are the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, and, for the two years' course, the Regent Street Polytechnic School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art. At the first examination thirty-one students were examined. Of these twenty-one satisfied the examiners, three obtaining honours. Eighteen of these, including the three honours, were students of the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, two of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and one of the Regent Street Polytechnic. This Diploma will clearly serve a great

purpose not only in the education of persons intending to follow the stage as a profession, but in providing fully qualified teachers for dramatic work in schools and in connection with amateur societies. We consider its institution a matter of great importance and congratulate the University of London on their enterprise.

252. The services rendered by these institutions are not confined to the training of actors and teachers of the dramatic art. They present in the course of each year a great variety of new plays, in particular poetic drama, and other plays which are too infrequently seen on the professional stage..

253 The School of Dramatic Study and Research at East London College came into being in the Autumn of 1925. The work of the school is intimately associated with the School of English Language and Literature under the direction of Professor Allardyce Nicoll. Courses of lectures have been arranged on subjects likely to be of interest to members of the acting profession and to the general student and lover of the theatre. These courses include The History of the Drama, The History of Theatrical Representation, The Nature and Origin of Drama, The Development of Dramatic Criticism, and Dramatic Technique (Play-writing). Performances in the College Theatre by professional casts have also been arranged, the plays being lesser known comedies of the period 1750-1800, designed to form illustrations to a series of public lectures on Drama in the time of Goldsmith and Sheridan. The Theatre has an "apron" stage, which will be of great service in the presentation of Elizabethan plays in a setting approximating as nearly as possible to that in which they were first performed.

254. In passing we may mention that the study of the art of the theatre has found a place in the curriculum of American Universities. Professor Matthews at Columbia University has brought together a dramatic library and models of theatres and scenery of all kinds. The story of Professor George Pierce Baker's classes in play writing at

Harvard University is well known. They were treated at first with derision in the comic papers, but the criticism has since been stilled by the emergence from the school of two of America's greatest playwrights. From Professor Baker's school at Harvard students have gone throughout the United States and further afield in many capacities. The list includes Directors, Producers, Playwrights, Actors, Teachers, Critics and Designers. Professor Baker has now been appointed head of the Department of Drama which has been established as one of the three departments of the Yale School of the Fine Arts. His duties include that of Professor of the History and the Technique of the Drama and Director of the University Theatre. The Theatre will form an integral part of the Department. The plans provide for a large stage and complete equipment. The seating capacity will be approximately 750. The workshop will contain a model studio, lighting, property and carpenter's shops, scene painting loft, costume studio and dye room. There will be two rehearsal rooms, one with a stage and small auditorium, besides class rooms and dressing rooms. Courses will be provided in Forms of the Drama, Technique of the Drama, Producing, Playwriting, Stage Design, Stage Lighting, Costume Design, Pageantry and Dramatic Criticism.

255. It is likely that many years may pass before a Department of the Drama so complete in every detail will be established in any English University. In particular we may have a long time to wait for the University Theatre. A lectureship in the art of the theatre could not however fail greatly to increase the general interest in the drama throughout the University, and lead to the establishment of a professional "repertory" theatre or of an amateur society of very high standard. In some Universities such conditions exist already. The Birmingham and Liverpool students for example have the advantage of local "repertory" theatres, and the former have a Playgoers Society which affords the theatre considerable support. Oxford has a Playhouse, where Mr. J. B. Fagan has given plays of notable excellence,

and an amateur society of considerable fame. Cambridge shares the latter privilege, and in general University towns may be said to have the advantage of professional theatres which commonly present the best type of touring companies.

256. The University Societies rank high among amateur societies both in the choice of plays and in the quality of production. The Oxford and Cambridge Societies both have a long history and have contributed some notable actors to the professional stage. The Oxford University Dramatic Society was founded in 1885 by permission of Mr. Jowett, Master of Balliol, who was then Vice-Chancellor. The first performance was *Henry IV, Part I*. The part of Hotspur was taken by Arthur Bouchier, that of Glendower by Holman Clark. A prologue written by the Hon. G. N. Curzon was recited by C. G. Lang and the Society had therefore among its earliest supporters men who were afterwards to attain the highest rank in Church and State as well as on the Stage. Under their Charter, the Society performs plays twice every year, one in the local theatre and the other in a College Garden during the summer, each for a week. There is a cycle of four years during which the Society does four Shakespeare plays, one Greek play in the original tongue and three other plays. Since the War these have been Ibsen's *Pretenders* and *Peer Gynt*, Hardy's *Dynasts* (in part) and Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (in English). The Society has also given plays in Sweden and Denmark in the vacation.

257. The Cambridge Amateur Dramatic Club was founded in 1857. Before the War it divided its energies mainly between classical eighteenth century comedy and modern farce: but in recent times it has greatly increased its range. Among its recent productions was the first public presentation in England of a play by Pirandello—*Henry IV*. The Marlowe Society was founded in 1907 for the performance of Elizabethan Plays. It has done notable pioneer work in this field, and developed a well-marked style and tradition of its own. Its three latest

productions have been Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, Jonson's *Volpone*, and Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*. The triennial presentations of Greek Plays, which date back to 1882, are managed by a separate organisation, and attract large audiences from all parts of the country. In addition, a number of English translations of Greek plays have been performed in recent years. Several operas have also been given in Cambridge since the war, including Purcell's *Fairy Queen* and Handel's *Semele*. The Greek Plays and Operas are performed in the local theatre, while the two dramatic societies share the small but well-equipped theatre belonging to the Amateur Dramatic Club.

258. The Liverpool University Dramatic Society has a history of twenty years. Its objects are to give University students an opportunity of acting and of interesting themselves in drama generally, particularly in plays which are not usually done on the professional stage. Their programme for the last three years maintains their high standard, and includes the *Coventry Nativity play*, a Molière, Tchekhov's *The Bear*, several plays by Shaw, Barrie and Drinkwater, and a new play by Lascelles Abercrombie. The Birmingham University Literary and Dramatic Society gives dramatic readings and performances of plays, and has made a point of producing plays written by its own members. Greek plays have been produced at University College, London. There is a Mermaid Society with headquarters at King's College, London, whose objects are to encourage the study of dramatic technique and to stimulate the writing and production of new plays. We have also received information as to dramatic societies at Sheffield University and the University College of the South-West of England.

259. We have no doubt that the encouragement of dramatic studies in the Universities would have a great and beneficent influence on the drama in England, as regards both the professional stage and the amateur movement. Since a study of the art of the theatre found a place in the

curriculum of the American Universities, there has been a great advance in the standard of the professional theatre, and the "Little Theatre" movement has won considerable success. Mr. Granville-Barker, in evidence, attributed this advance mainly to the work of Professor Baker at Harvard University, of which we have already given an account. Mr. Barbor also in some brief notes on the "Little Theatre" movement refers to the University influence. "In a way, it has derived a good deal of its impetus from the various schools of drama and theatrical curricula associated with the universities and scholastic institutions, several of which have experimental theatres of their own. Smith College, Northampton, Mass., is an example of this; Cornell is another. But the nation-wide 'Little Theatre' movement of America, in addition to its general educational value to the participants and audiences throughout the length and breadth of the States, also produces many keen students of the drama who graduate from their amateur activities to take a place in the cultural life of the States as students in the academic dramatic institutions, as teachers of drama and dramatic methods of history teaching in the schools, or find scope for their talents in the professional theatre as players, dramatists, or technical experts in lighting and decoration "

260. "Eugene O'Neill, one of the leading dramatists of the world to-day, was in the first instance associated with an amateur movement, the Provincetown Players, which has now established itself high in the cultural life of New York. Susan Glaspell, another famous American dramatist and novelist, sprang from a like source. In fact, numerous writers in America have tried their 'prentice hand and perfected their technique by way of these experimental playhouses in various parts of the States."

261. "Most of these movements derive from a group of enthusiasts starting sometimes in the most economical way to present plays, and many of them have so far established themselves in the esteem of the community



that they have been able to erect and equip with the most modern devices of stage craft beautiful Community Theatres. An example of this is the Pasadena Community Playhouse Association which has a fine theatre, conducted by a non-professional group and catering for a wide and catholic public taste. A whole range of drama from open-air productions of Greek Plays in replicas of Greek theatres to modern farcical comedy or revue types of production is given by the various 'Little Theatre' groups."

## VIII.—OTHER AMATEUR SOCIETIES.

*A Prison Experiment.*

262. Before we leave the subject of dramatic activities in association with educational institutions we wish to mention an experiment in the use of the drama as an educational instrument made in connection with the scheme of education in prisons which was recently sanctioned by the Prison Commissioners. This experiment arose out of the deliberate and considered view of the promoter that in the drama was to be found a means of interesting not only the small element in any prison which had some intellectual interests but the much larger element "that vast untouched multitude of men working at semi-skilled and unskilled jobs, whose main interests are professional 'soccer' matches and the racecourse, who prefer the free and easy atmosphere of the bar parlour to the most diverting excursion into the laws of economics" He appears to have based his theory on the reflection that Shakespeare wrote his plays for an audience composed very largely of this type, and to have assured his class, on first meeting them, that to enjoy Shakespeare a knowledge of life (which he was sure that they had) was far more important than a knowledge of books. Volunteers were called for to read parts, and in the result "an Indian of ferocious appearance acquired the part of Rosalind and a guttural gentleman who had lived on the wrong side of the barbed wire during the War became Jacques." We are glad to hear that *As You Like It* was a great success notwithstanding the fact that the wrestling match could not be carried through. *The Merchant of Venice* which followed appears also to have been a success, and the *Quality of mercy is not strained* to have gone down very well, "but I was unable to permit a discussion initiated by a solicitor on the difference between law and justice with particular reference to his own trial." We are informed that the interest in Shakespeare became

such that it was a common experience of one of the teachers to meet members of his class at Shakespeare performances after their release.

263. After two years of classes conducted on the basis of the prisoners themselves reading plays under the general guidance of a teacher, it was found possible, owing to the generous action of Miss Margaret Yarde, Miss Dorothy Massingham, Miss Sybil Thorndike and Miss Jean Cadell, to supplement the classes by occasional play readings, in which many of the most distinguished representatives of the professional stage have taken part. These readings in the opinion of our witness set the seal on the value of the work done in class. "I do not think that anyone who has been present at these readings could doubt the immense power of the drama. It seems to combine every element which helps towards the education of these men and turns them into better citizens. In the first place the plays stop them brooding over their supposed wrongs. Most prisoners, particularly first offenders, are in this morbid condition. If we have a comedy, it makes them laugh and takes them out of themselves. If we have tragedy, it has sometimes a rather devastating effect. I remember one occasion when many of the prisoners broke down. I was rather shocked at the time, but I think now that it was a good thing. They had begun to feel, and when that happens, one can do quite a lot with them. Moreover practically all prisoners suffer from an overwhelming vanity. They think that the great thing is to be "slicker" than the next man. Plays afford countless opportunities for pouring scorn on the "slick" character, and showing that people can be expected to live decent lives without being impelled by hope of reward or fear of punishment. Our discussions on Macbeth, Antony, Falstaff and Othello for instance provided many opportunities for the unobtrusive sorting out of the tangled skein of a prisoner's moral ideas. If I preached to them for an hour on the advantages of a generous temper, they would not listen, or, if they listened, would forget before the lecture

was over. But when they see Antony dying on the stage with no word of reproach on his lips, they understand and do not forget. I regard good plays as an unrivalled instrument of conveying moral truths. But I think that they have another and equally important side. If I took a class in economics, I should always be in the position of a teacher, by whatever title I chose to call myself. I would have the advantage of a trained mind, and an accumulation of facts far greater than that of anyone in my class. But in the study of the drama my education has left me little, if at all, in advance of any of my class, because the points which come up for discussion are questions of life and character where their knowledge and experience are as great, and probably greater, than my own. It seems to me that we find in the plays, and particularly in the Shakespeare plays, a basis of common experience and common humanity which destroys any barrier erected by social conventions and differences in educational opportunities. I cannot help feeling that the drama might be a great instrument for bringing healing into our social disorders which are so largely caused by suspicion and distrust brought about by our failure to get to know each other."

### *Boys' Clubs.*

264. We have described at some length dramatic societies definitely promoted as part of a scheme of education, or forming part of the activities of an institution with educational aims. We turn now to boys' clubs where the aim may be described as social rather than educational. The evidence which we have received is of interest as reinforcing that already given, suggesting that people whom no other intellectual interest seems to touch can become quite enthusiastic about the drama. We have received a considerable amount of evidence from the Managers of Boys' Clubs. The drama appears to arouse increasing interest in these if we may judge from a list given to us by the Federation of London Working Boys'

Clubs We note also that there is a Plays and Pageants Committee of the Birmingham Juvenile Organisation Committee which publishes "A book of the play" for the special use of clubs and schools. In an earlier chapter we gave a brief account of the David Lewis Club at Liverpool which is so fortunate as to have a theatre, and is able not only to produce plays but to invite other societies to give plays there. A good example of the boys' club society is the Oxford and Bermondsey Shakespeare Society, which, composed entirely of working boys from a very poor neighbourhood, has given plays of Shakespeare continuously since 1912 except during the war years. The production in the autumn of 1925 was *Hamlet*. Mr. Field Jones, the producer, asked for his views on the educational value, wrote "About 5 per cent. or less of our boy actors learn to appreciate the language of Shakespeare, but very few of them read, and hardly one writes decent English. The whole value—or very nearly the whole value—(I think) lies in their keen enjoyment of the acting as a form of expression and legitimate self-display, and the intensely valuable training of the team spirit necessitated by everyone merging his own wishes and convenience in the requirements of the whole caste—punctuality for rehearsals, thoroughness at dull spade work, striving for corporate effect rather than individual brilliance, etc. In fact, the value of our yearly production (which I am certain is very great) is much the same as the value of a good football team—only it appeals to a rather different type of boy who would probably not be interested much in football."

### *Works and Offices.*

265. The Managers of Boys' Clubs have found plays a good means of getting boys together and of training the mind and character. This appears to be also the experience of the Welfare Superintendents who have run clubs in connection with factories and business houses. The most notable example of welfare schemes with play production

as their keynote has already been described in our paragraphs on the Leeds and Bradford Industrial Theatres. In Yorkshire also the Welfare scheme of Messrs Rowntree and Co. has a dramatic section and we have also received accounts of similar work at Messrs. Mander at Wolverhampton and Messrs. Lyons in London. We were told in one case that "the firm had no ulterior motive in encouraging the drama beyond a general theory that the better educated people were, the better the results. Managers at centres appeared to regard members of the dramatic society with favour. They seemed to be better workers. They were more alert, they had learned how to speak."

266. A very active society is the Bournville Dramatic Society the membership of which is confined to employees of Messrs Cadbury. It was founded in 1911 following on the production of some open-air masques written and produced on behalf of the firm. We are informed that "all classes of employees take part in the work of the Society on an equal footing. As an example, an apprentice in the laboratory had a leading part in a play produced by the head of his own department; in the subsequent production the roles were reversed. The producer of a recent production was a piece-rate setter.

267. The productions of the society number more than 140. This is largely due to the adoption of a somewhat unusual practice, which is thus described. The Society "began with the reading of plays round a table, with discussion, and an occasional lecture. Acting of scenes and passages followed, and subsequently acted readings of whole plays. These led in turn to a series of staged readings, which have since formed the bulk of the Society's work. Plays are produced in every detail, except that the words are not memorised."

268 "An audience was gradually attracted, though not sought after, who speedily became accustomed to what was, after all (in the words of a member) 'merely one

slight addition to the many conventions one already accepts on the stage,' i.e. the book in the actor's hand. Strangers have expressed themselves as being quite oblivious, after the first few minutes, of the presence of a book, and the actors become adepts at disguising its presence."

269. "Most of these staged readings, which were varied by finished productions once or twice a year, were done, either on the floor, or on a "fit up" stage in one of the works dining rooms, made of planks laid across tables. This method is still followed on the stage now built by the firm, though more ambitious productions have been attempted in addition. A tentative return has also been made to the 'round the table readings,' as in the case of such plays as O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* and Galsworthy's *The Forest*."

270. We confess to some doubt whether "the one slight addition to the many conventions one already accepts on the stage" does not detract from the value of the play production so far as the actors are concerned, however little it may affect the impression left on the audience.

271. Another society which received considerable praise from one of our witnesses is the Longsight C.W.S. Dramatic Society, which forms a section of a social club connected with a large printing works. We are informed that the society is "living in hopes of one day playing *Hamlet*."

272. From another society connected with a great office in London we have evidence which throws some light on the drama as a means of bringing people together. "The staff of the office is very large and includes people of many types. There are men in administrative posts, mostly of university education, there are clerks of many grades, girl clerks, girl typists and messengers. We have had a Whitley Council for years which tried hard to bring people together but without much success. Athletic clubs of various kinds were started, but they never seemed to touch more than a few people, most of them belonging to the same office

grade. In fact we continued to live in a large number of water tight compartments, and there was very little *esprit de corps*. Then we had the idea of starting a dramatic society. We went about it very carefully. We collected representative people from every grade and drew up a memorandum setting out the objects. They were briefly described as 'to unite the staff in a common enterprise to which all could contribute in accordance with their talents,' and it was pointed out that not only actors but musicians, dancers, carpenters, dressmakers, scene shifters and programme sellers would all be wanted."

273. "An invitation was then sent to everyone in the office to attend a meeting. This invitation was delivered personally by the representatives who had already been selected because of their reputed influence among their own people, and I am sure that this made a great difference. In the result we had the biggest gathering which the office had ever seen, and the society soon numbered its members in hundreds, while the other office societies numbered theirs in tens. We obtained in fact more than 400 members. But more important than this was the fact that they were drawn from every grade. We then decided to produce a Shakespeare play. We chose a Shakespeare play in preference to a costume or a modern play for a variety of reasons, but the principal reason was that it gave scope to such a variety of talents. We had for instance to provide some Elizabethan music, both orchestral and choral. This gave scope to our singers and musicians, and incidentally opened to them a rich field of music with which they had little familiarity. We had also to give some dances, so we started a folk dancing class. This proved very attractive and has continued with unabated vigour ever since. I consider this a most important side of the work. The development of physical grace seems to me a most valuable element in education. We had also to design and make special dresses and properties, and this brought in craftsmen and dress-makers."



274. "If we had given a modern play we could have made use of hardly any of these people. Another point we had in mind was that modern plays have small casts. The Shakespeare play had a cast of twenty-six. In the result we had more than a hundred people with an active interest in the play. They were all set out on the programme, in order to show that the play was intended to be a common enterprise rather than a histrionic exhibition by a few select people."

275. "Our primary object in founding the society was to bring people together and to establish friendlier relations between the various grades in the office. This object has certainly been accomplished. Within the society there exists no distinction of persons. The actors in our first play came from every part of the office. We took the precaution of inviting someone to cast the play who had practically no acquaintance with the staff. In the result two distinguished members of the administrative staff were allotted parts as artisans, while two of the messengers became courtiers. The society is divided into various committees responsible for special pieces of work. The chairman of the committee has under him, as often as not, people much senior to himself in the office. The property master for instance is a messenger."

276. We consider that the evidence just quoted and that of other societies connected with works and offices suggests that apart from any question of the educational benefit of acting, and the intellectual content of a play, the drama is an unrivalled instrument for breaking down social barriers, and establishing friendly relations. A second conclusion is that this result is obtained in fullest measure when the production of a play is made a co-operative venture employing every sort of talent, and not an exhibition of acting alone.

## IX. THE DRAMA AND THE CHURCHES.

277. A very remarkable element in the present dramatic revival has been the interest taken by the Churches. In the middle ages the Church was the protagonist of the drama, and used it as a means of religious education. It would almost appear that this situation is arising again to-day. In the evidence which we have quoted there has been constant mention of the production by amateur societies of Nativity and Miracle Plays. In the Beechcroft Nativity Pageant Play 150 people took part in some capacity. *Everyman* constantly appears in the record of work of amateur societies, while Miss Buckton's *Eager Heart* and a number of religious plays written specially for performance in Churches have achieved an almost equal popularity. Miss Elsie Fogerty's *The Mystery of the Rose* was produced recently in the churchyard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, by the staff and students of the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art. The Graham Street Players have produced a religious play at the "Old Vic," and the "Mystical Players" of St. Paul's, Covent Garden have given plays at the Strand Theatre on Sunday afternoons. *The Great World Theatre* was produced at a Church in Leeds over a period of three weeks by the Leeds Art Theatre. A *Christmas Mystery Play* of a most impressive character has been given in Southwark Cathedral.

278. A great stimulus has been given to the work in the Church of England by the Catholic Play Society whose headquarters are at 75, St. Mark's Road, North Kensington, W.10. We received an account from the Director, the Rev. H. Kingsford. He said that "the Society was founded in 1917 in view of the increasing interest which was then beginning to be taken in the revival of religious drama as a part of the teaching department of the Church. The objects are to promote through religious drama the Glory of God; a wider realisation of the truths of the Catholic Faith; the honour due to the Mother of God and to the

Saints. The more material objects of the Society are to encourage by every means in its power the development of an adequate and convincing representation through the medium of drama of the truths of the Christian Faith and the history of the Church. To this end the Society is prepared, and it is anxious to give whatever help it can through its various departments, which are :—

"(i) *The production of plays.* The Society produces religious plays, usually in London, from time to time, and has done so at the Royal Victoria Hall; the Great Hall of the Church House, Westminster; King George's Hall, Tottenham Court Road; The Theatre of the Guildhall School of Music; The Theatre of the Royal Albert Hall, (private performance); The Guild House, Eccleston Square, W., and at the New Theatre."

"(ii) *Advice as to choice of plays.* For this purpose the Society has published a list (the only one of its kind in existence) of religious plays of all kinds, Mystery, Morality, Liturgical, etc., numbering about 120. Most of these plays are modern, some being only in MS. or typescript, but the list also contains the well-known ancient plays such as *Everyman*."

"(iii) *The dressing of plays.* The Society has a hiring department from which dresses and properties for the production of religious plays can be obtained. It usually supplies at Christmas time costumes and properties for about 60 to 70 plays in various parts of the United Kingdom."

"(iv) *Criticisms of plays.* MS. and other plays are sent by authors for the approval of the Society, and if approved are placed on the Society's list. Advice and help in regard to MSS. are also given when desired."

"(v) *Publications.* Besides the list of plays mentioned above, the Society also produces thrice yearly a magazine entitled 'The Pagiante,' which is devoted entirely to religious drama and, as well as containing articles dealing with the subject in its various branches, also notices all

religious plays, tableaux, etc., produced elsewhere from time to time, of which information reaches the Society. It has also published pamphlets dealing with the dressing, make up, lighting, etc., of plays and tableaux, with full directions, for the use of parishes and local guilds."

279. In the Society's journal will be found a record of the production of religious plays which shows how very important and widespread the movement has become. An account of one of the productions which we have received from the Rev. G. Napier Whittingham of St. Silas the Martyr, Kentish Town is also of interest. He said that "he had gone to Kentish Town in 1907 and that some form of dramatic work had been carried on in connection with the church ever since 1909. At that time there was only a mission room. The new Church was built 12 years ago. The plays were now given in the Church with a background of curtains. He thought that the plays were much more effective in church than in a room. The atmosphere was more reverent. The three plays at present given were *The Mystery of the Epiphany*, which gave the Bible story from the Annunciation to the first miracle; together with a prologue and epilogue according to mediaeval custom. *The Mystery of the Passion*, which gave the story from the Last Supper to the Resurrection, and *Paul and Silas* dealing with their imprisonment. These plays were written by a friend, and produced by himself. The dresses worn in the plays were woven at Jerusalem at the looms re-opened by Sir Ronald Storrs after the War. Nothing changed in the East, and these dresses were of similar material to those worn a thousand years ago."

280. "The Players were drawn from members of the congregation, who were not necessarily all drawn from the parish. The part of the Madonna and the part of Christ were generally not taken by members of the congregation, but this was for a special reason. The players were in the main working-class lads who had grown up with the Church. Practically all the Players were still under 30 years of age.

They numbered between 35 and 40. They were mostly of the working classes such as shop-boys, messenger boys, railwaymen, clerks in insurance offices, etc. He had lost some of the Players during the War, and a few had ceased to be interested when they grew up. But most of the Players had been with him throughout."

281. "The effect, both religious and educational, on them was very great indeed. He thought that the plays were worth all the sermons in the world. The boys got to know the parts so well that if anyone forgot his part the other boys were all able to prompt him. He thought that it humanised the people who took part, and led them on to other things."

282. At St. Paul's, Covent Garden, of which we have also received an account, a "Drama Service" was held on Sunday afternoons in the winter months supplementary to the usual Church services. "The fundamental idea of this service was that a play conveying some moral or religious lesson should take the part usually played by the Lessons in Morning and Evening Service: and the preacher usually based his discourse upon the lesson inculcated by the play performed. It will thus be seen that the plays were produced, not merely as plays on religious themes, but as an integral and basic part of Divine Worship."

283. With regard to the Roman Catholic Church we are told that the drama is encouraged in most Catholic Schools, particularly in the larger secondary schools; that in many parishes plays are performed for recreative purposes, while Mystery plays have become popular in recent years; and that a Catholic Stage Guild exists for intercourse between Catholic members of the acting profession. In the direction and promotion of these movements the clergy take a prominent part. "Nevertheless clerics are forbidden by Canon Law to attend theatres. The precise interpretation of the law in each country is left in the hands of the Bishops and varies slightly, e.g., in Germany clerics may go to the Opera. The object of this ban (which dates from

the Council of Trent) is (a) to prevent attendance of clerics at unseemly spectacles, and (b) to prevent the 'Theatre-habit' among clerics which might draw them away from their work and vocation."

284. We are informed also that in the Free Churches "there is a growing tendency to use the drama with high purpose and with valuable effect. This began largely in pageants, missionary and other. The great pageant of *Darkness and Light*, produced twenty years ago, gave considerable impulse to this, and more recently the production of such pageants as the *Mayflower* has revived the tendency to utilise this method for the presentation of the history of the Church at home and abroad. These pageants have been presented in a large number of the great towns of the country by local organisation of groups of people from the various churches in the neighbourhood. The main feature of work of this kind however is its fidelity not only to historical fact and to psychological development but to the creative spirit in art and music."

285. "To individual churches belongs the credit for the revival, or the writing and presentation for their own local purpose, of Miracle, Mystery and Nativity plays. Thus, for example, *Everyman* has been produced at two or three churches in South London, and in particular at the Lewisham High Street Congregational Church."

286. "About five years ago, at the Beckenham Congregational Church, *The Story of the Nativity* was presented in a wordless play performed in the chancel of the Church. Previously the story of the Nativity was read by the Minister, and music was used as an accompaniment to the silent movements of the actors. No scenery was used, but costumes, properties, and lighting gave the necessary effects."

287. "The most highly developed work of this kind done in a Free Church is probably that carried out during the last five or six years at the King's Weigh House Church.

There have been plays for six years in the chancel of this Church, without scenery and, till the last one, without a curtain. Players entering by aisles, and lights raised and lowered, are used to mark episodes, and to cover changes."

288. "The first two were specially for children, they consisted of a told story, *Saint Bride* and *Ithar*, followed by dumb show representations of the stories with appropriate music. Each story included a Holy Family tableau with the adoration of Shepherds and Wise Men. There were eight or nine players in the first, and between twenty and thirty in the second, including a crowd of village people."

289. "The third consisted of the Adoration of the Shepherds and Kings and of various people representing Art, Music, Labour, etc., with short readings and appropriate music during the action."

290. "The fourth play had speaking parts—all Bible words—in three episodes.

(a) The Annunciation and Visitation.

(b) The Nativity and the Adoration.

(c) The Presentation in the Temple.

Three speakers introduced the episodes—Balaam; Isaiah; Saint John the Beloved Disciple. There was also music—classical, church and carols."

291. "The fifth play was *St. Francis and the Christmas Crib*. It consisted of readings from the 'Life' by Thomas of Celano, read by a Franciscan Friar, dumb show acting and singing. It included the coming of the village people through the woods (up the Church aisles) with candles, and the Midnight Mass. About forty players took part."

292. "The sixth play, called *A Masque of the Epiphany* was written for two chief speaking parts. It consisted of four episodes representing the worship of Africans, Indians, Chinese, and Wise Men and ending at the stable of Bethlehem. Foreign and Classic Christian music was used. About fifty players took part."

293. An interesting feature of the work done at the King's Weigh House Church is that the plays have been presented also at certain Anglican Churches, for example, at St. Paul's, Covent Garden ; Christ Church, Westminster ; and All Hallows', East India Dock Road. In each case the performance was in the Church. It is strongly felt by those responsible for the King's Weigh House dramatic work that the atmosphere of the church building is essential to the proper rendering of the plays. It may be added that some of the *Little Plays of St. Francis* have also recently been performed in the Church itself.

294. Work of a high artistic standard has also been carried on by a Church at Middlesbrough. The producer holds that "the right treatment for this type of play is not at all the realistic but the suggestive, with the simplest possible staging and hardly any scenery, but gay and beautiful colours in the dresses and good lighting effects. It is just here that there is so much to be learnt from the modern experiments in stage lighting that have made such changes in the theatre in the last few years. Of course it is unnecessary to add that music, the best possible, is essential in this type of play."

295. The Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, also regards drama as a part of its normal life and activity, and promotes it through a group who concern themselves with modern plays as well as with the production of plays of the type of which an account has been given. It is interesting to observe that in the production of plays the Guildhouse regards it as valuable to secure the assistance not only of professional producers but generally of one or two professional actors. The plays are usually performed in the Church.

296. We received also an account of a society of a rather different character connected with a Baptist Church in North London, which had for its object the production of plays at Hospitals, Infirmarys and Poor Law Institutions and had carried on this benevolent work with much success.



297. The evidence which we have quoted shows that there is a growing tendency in the Churches to regard the drama as an instrument of teaching of great value. On various points which arise in the evidence we are indisposed to make any comment. We can only repeat our agreement with Dr. Boas' conclusion mentioned in an earlier paragraph that if the drama is again to take its full place in English life, it must again find allies in the Church and in the Schools, such as it was happy in possessing earlier in our history.

## X. THE DRAMA IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

*Popular Character*

298. Our survey is nearly complete. We have considered drama in great towns, in every variety of educational and social institution, and finally in connection with the Church. We turn now to the small towns and to the countryside. The notable work of the Arts League of Service Travelling Theatre which has been described in an earlier chapter, has been responsible in a considerable measure for much of the dramatic activity in the countryside. The new dramatic movement is as strong here as in the towns. Perhaps it is even stronger. It is of varying types. There are players for instance drawn in the main from artists and craftsmen settled in the countryside, such as those of Mr. Rutland Boughton at Glastonbury, producing new plays on a high artistic level, and akin generally to urban societies such as the Unnamed Society, Manchester.

*Glastonbury.*

299 Mr. Rutland Boughton was good enough to send us his book on the Glastonbury Festival Movement. These Festivals of Music and Drama had their origin in two ideas, neither of which was completely realised. One was that of Mr. Reginald Buckley who wished to found a Festival Theatre after the plan of the Wagner Theatre at Bayreuth for the performance of musical and dramatic works based upon British legend. Mr. Rutland Boughton wished to found a colony of artists who preferred a country life and felt that the means of livelihood should be gained by other means than those of art, preferably by farming. In August 1913 an experimental performance of *The Birth of Arthur* was given. This was followed by *The Immortal Hour*, which, after production by the Festival Players at Glastonbury and elsewhere, was given by the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and ultimately had a great success in London. The War put an end to the hope of raising the money for the theatre, but a small body of players was formed by the

townspeople with whose help Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and a musical *Nativity Play* were given.

300. In the autumn of 1915 Mr. Boughton set to music the old *Coventry Nativity Play* with the idea of making a work that could be performed entirely by the local players. This play was called *Bethlehem* and has since won considerable fame. In 1916 *Everyman* was given. Of this Mr. Boughton says "It has seemed right to us to revive it several times since in furtherance of our plan to seek the well springs of national art—our folk music, the Early English miracle plays, Elizabethan madrigals—because so we revive that savour of national idiom which has been vitiated or lost by foreign influences foisted upon our people by those who follow fashion in art as well as in thought and clothing. The English tongue in *Everyman* is so incomparably beautiful a thing that even when the players have not easily understood it they have unconsciously learned how strong pure English may be—a lesson they could only gain in snatches from Shakespeare and from other dramatists not at all."

301. *The Sumida River* and *The Round Table*, the second of the cycle of Arthurian music-dramas, followed. After the 1916 Festival, Mr. Boughton left for military service. The Players continued to produce on their own account plays by Shaw, Yeats, Tagore and others until it proved possible to resume the regular work in 1919. During the years 1919-25 many further performances were given of *Everyman*, *Bethlehem*, *The Immortal Hour*, *The Birth of Arthur*, and *The Round Table*, and of new work, including Mr. Boughton's *Alkestis*, *The Queen of Cornwall*, and the Franciscan plays of Mr. Lawrence Housman who had joined the Players. Between 1914 and 1925 the Players have given 388 stage performances in addition to concerts and lectures. These include a number of performances in London and in many towns and in the West of England. Nearly 700 performances have been given by other companies of plays which were first performed at Glastonbury.

302. The Glastonbury Players are fortunate in that many of their productions are given under the personal direction of the dramatist or composer. Great art demands unity of conception, but in the special circumstances of the dramatic art this unity can only be achieved on those rare occasions when author and producer are one.

303. There are other ventures which have some kinship with the Festival Players, such as that of Miss Buckton also at Glastonbury, and of Mr. Napier Miles at Shirehampton. Mention must also be made of Mr. John Masefield's Hill Players whose object is the production of masterpieces of the poetical drama. The Players are men and women of the district with occasional friends from elsewhere. Mr. Masefield has built a small theatre for their use. The Cotswold Players were founded in 1912 by Constance Smedley and Maxwell Armfield, then living at Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire. This society produced several of Miss Smedley's plays, most of which had local connection, John Drinkwater's *Cophetua*, and others, chiefly poetical drama.

#### *The Hardy Players.*

304. In seeking the well springs of national art and attempting to revive a national idiom, which has been overlaid by foreign influences, Mr. Boughton has given us his cycles of Arthurian Legend in a new form of music-drama. Mr. Thomas Hardy has given us a play based on a legend of the distant past in *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall*. But his genius has created for us also in his novels a wonderful picture of the life of Wessex during a period within living memory when no trace of foreign influence disturbed local customs or local speech. Some of these novels have been dramatised by Mr. Hardy himself, Mr. A. H. Evans and Mr. T. H. Tilley, and have been presented by the Hardy Players. These Players were drawn from the Dramatic Section of the Dorchester Debating Society, which originally performed short plays and Shakespeare Comedies. In 1908 the first Hardy Play was given, and was succeeded in the next six years by *The*

*Trumpet Major, Far from the Madding Crowd, The Mellstock Quire* (taken from *Under the Greenwood Tree*), *The Three Wayfarers, The Distracted Preacher* and *The Woodlanders*. In 1916 Wessex Scenes from *The Dynasts* were presented, and in the years succeeding the War *The Return of the Native, A Desperate Remedy, The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall*, and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

305. We have received an interesting account of the Players drawn up, after consultation with Mr. Thomas Hardy, by an independent critic, Mr. Frederick E. Hansford, who has seen much of their work. This account brings out many points which give the Hardy Players an almost unique position among dramatic societies.

306. "The Players," he writes, "are bent on faithfully representing what is usually described as the 'atmosphere' of the Wessex novels. All that the works of Mr. Hardy owe to the ancient dialect, customs, and folklore, the quaint rustic wit and wisdom, the home-crafts and field-crafts—is dear, too, to the hearts of the Hardy Players. Not only are these things dear to the impersonators, but they are able to present them upon the stage by the instinct of relationship. For they are local men and women who, pursuing their daily rounds amid Dorset dialect and scenery, have been long familiarised with the speech, the dwellings, and the habits of the characters portrayed in the novels."

307. "The Players occupy widely-varying walks of life, the one criterion in the selection being the ability to personate the characters they are to present. Educationally, this point is of great interest as showing that innate histrionic power is to be found among all classes, and often where least it is to be expected."

308. "By endeavouring to represent the old-world life of Wessex the players are undoubtedly performing a valuable literary and historical work. By the close study of the Wessex novels with their wealth of characterisation and social manners the Players not only help to preserve a rich

and philologically interesting dialect that may, under modern conditions of life, all too quickly disappear, but to awaken in their audiences an interest in local history and literature, and encourage the study of what William Barnes, the Dorchester poet, so admirably termed "Speechcraft." There can be few neighbourhoods so unfortunate as to possess no links with history and literature, and what the Dorchester Dramatic Society has done can be accomplished in some measure in other districts "

309. " It is interesting to record that the Hardy Plays have been produced not only in Dorchester and London, but in some cases on the very ground where the action of the dramatised story occurs. To give but two examples—in 1916 scenes from *The Dynasts* were presented at Weymouth, the very town (Budmouth of the novels) where much of the incident of the selected scenes took place. In 1911 *The Distracted Preacher* was also produced there, the imaginary scenes of which are laid in the villages not far distant. Nor have open-air settings been disregarded, for beautiful old-world backgrounds have been utilised such as the historic manor-house of Bingham's Melcombe, the old castle grounds of Sturminster Newton, and a comely greensward at Cerne Abbas. A link between past and present formed a pleasing feature of the performance of *The Mellstock Quire* in 1918, when the present members of the " Mellstock " (Stinsford) choir were invited in a body to witness the doings of their early-Victorian predecessors."

310. " The Players enjoy the inestimable advantage of the presence of Mr. Hardy himself at Dorchester, whose advice and ever-keen interest in their productions have very largely contributed to the success of their efforts. Mr. Hardy's very practical interest is the more valued in that the Players have to create their own standards of performance. In the production of, say, Shakespeare or Sheridan plays an amateur cast can at least have the advantage of witnessing the acting of some professional companies that may chance to perform them. The Hardy Players

have few, if any, predecessors whom they can emulate. That the master who created the characters should personally criticise their impersonations is therefore a subject of justifiable pride and deepest gratitude in the hearts of the Players."

311. There are other societies which, though they have not the good fortune of the Hardy Players in having for their counsellor one of the greatest living writers, have made an attempt to recreate interest in the old life of the countryside, and to keep alive local dialect and customs. The Grasmere Players have a history of thirty two years. They were founded in 1893 by Miss Fletcher who wrote the earliest plays. In 1904 she left Grasmere for some years and Mrs. Rawnsley has written the plays ever since. All the plays are spoken entirely in dialect, many of the phrases, rhymes and sayings being communicated by the village people. In all of them an attempt is made to represent scenes of everyday Westmorland village life. The Players are drawn entirely from the working people of the village, and vary in age from small children to men and women over seventy. The costumes and properties come from village homes. Mrs. Rawnsley tells us that acting has always been popular in the countryside. "There is a record of plays acted at the end of the seventeenth century 'on a scaffold' in the neighbouring village of Troutbeck, written by the uncle of Hogarth the painter. The children of Grasmere still act fragments of the old Mumming play at Easter."

### *Welsh Drama and the Portmadoc Players.*

312. In Wales also similar efforts have been made to revive interest in history and language through the drama. We are indebted to Mr. R. G. Berry of Cardiff for an account of the movement which we reproduce :—

313. "The modern revival of Welsh drama should be more fully regarded as its birth, for the drama in Wales in its present form began in the last decade of the previous century and credit is due to Mr. Beriah Evans as the pioneer

of the movement in its infancy. In the 'nineties two Welsh amateur companies made a short tour with a play written by Mr. Evans and a dramatised version of the novel *Rhys Lewis*. They met with strong disapproval from influential religious quarters. This opposition is intelligible when we remember a whole century of religious culture impressed upon the Welsh people through the agency of Sunday School work and its literature."

314. "The drama movement was aided by that other national institution, the Eisteddfod, where prizes were given for the best written plays. Opposition has gradually died away and to-day Welsh drama is played, not in any National theatre, but in distant towns and villages, in halls or vestries connected with the churches. There is no Welsh theatre like the Abbey Theatre of the Irish drama: the nearest approach to this is the successful experiment made by the Swansea Cymmrodorion during the last three years to give a week's performance of new Welsh plays. The drama movement like the Eisteddfod is in touch with church life, and this accounts for the censorship more or less consciously exercised by the community over plays and Eisteddfod compositions. A certain type of play and of novel popular elsewhere would be impossible in Welsh-speaking Wales where the majority are attached directly or indirectly to some religious body. Books are bought and read, and plays performed within this particular circle."

315. "We are often reminded that Wales has not yet produced any play comparable to the works of the Irish playwright, J. M. Synge; neither has the English Theatre of modern times. It was this writer of rare genius that gave the Irish drama its great vogue. During the last decade the Welsh University has been making itself felt and there is an improvement in the literary quality of plays. If the barren criticism that is always suggesting the inferiority of Welsh authorship ceases, better work will be forthcoming, with the result that a new lease of life will be extended to the language. In the recent inquiry of the departmental



committee on the Welsh language a memorandum prepared by the National Union of Teachers, deploring the lost supremacy of the vernacular, advocates among other measures the popularising of the Welsh drama in schools as a means of arresting the decline of the mother tongue."

316. "It must be admitted that good Welsh plays are few in number and translations from other sources, however good they may be as dramatic models, are not likely to help the Welsh drama movement. Mr. D. T. Davies occupies a foremost place in the history of recent Welsh drama."

317. "At the last Celtic Congress in Dublin one speaker suggested that all Welshmen writing in English should be regarded as English Writers. If this rule were enforced in Ireland, there would be no Irish drama, for all the playwrights of the Abbey Theatre have written in English—Synge, Yeats, Lady Gregory and others. This stricture would anglicize the foremost Welsh Grammarian and our greatest Welsh Historian and one or two Welsh literary critics would cease to be Welsh. Welsh drama is deeply indebted to J O Francis who writes in English. Neither can we forget that our National movement is being assisted by the Portmadoc Players who are so successful in the production of the English type of play popularized by the Little Theatre, London."

318. We have received from another source an account of the Portmadoc Players. Their aims, we are informed, are :—  
 "(i) To bring together those men and women in Portmadoc and the surrounding districts who are interested in the art of the theatre, and to achieve a close and useful co-operation between the various existing dramatic societies by inviting them to join our society and thus form one central and comprehensive dramatic club to include all the histrionic talent of the neighbourhood. (ii) To read, and produce as artistically as we can, plays by the best authors especially those of young Welshmen, whether writing in English or in Welsh. (iii) To encourage the serious study of the technique of playwriting, acting and play-producing and of all

those crafts which help towards artistic stage representation (iv) To support enthusiastically all those who are striving towards the common ideal of a Welsh National Theatre that shall be worthy of the race and country we belong to."

319. The Players gave their first public performance at the Town Hall, Portmadoc, in April 1923. The programme consisted of three one-act plays—*The Poacher* by J. O. Francis, *The Man Born to be Hanged* by Richard Hughes, and *Cloudbreak* by A. O. Roberts. The last two plays had not been performed on any stage. The plays attracted so much attention that the Players were invited to give a series of performances in London. The ordinary occupation of the Players made it impossible for more than one performance to be given. This took place in February 1924 and attracted considerable attention.

320. Many of our witnesses attached very great importance to the presentation of plays designed to revive interest in local tradition, and in particular dialect plays, and we concur in their view. One of the principal activities of the Village Drama Society is the encouragement of plays dealing with local history, and in local dialect, and the Society provides materials for this purpose to local playwrights. One memorandum which we received makes the point that country people have a natural pleasure in language which town people have lost.

### *The Stoneland Players.*

321. While we consider dialect plays of such importance, we are able to adduce much evidence as to the success of other types of play in the countryside. We turn now from recording the work of societies presenting drama based on native idiom, and concerned with customs and places familiar to players and audience, to a remarkable experiment of another character. For many years Mrs. Godwin King and the Stoneland Players have presented Greek plays in the Village of West Hoathly, Sussex. The success of these plays is due no doubt in a very large measure to

the enthusiasm of Mrs. Godwin King. But this success could not have been achieved through so long a period by the enthusiasm of Mrs. King alone. The record which we now give provides convincing testimony of the power of great art, as represented in the Greek plays, to appeal, not to a select few only, but to all.

322. In giving evidence before us Mrs. Godwin King said that "the performances of The Stoneland Players were the outcome of a course of University Extension Lectures on The Inspiration of Greece, in 1910, and Greek plays in Professor Gilbert Murray's translations had been given each summer ever since, except during the War. The idea really came from her mother. She was blind but, in spite of her blindness, took a very great interest in the production, attended all rehearsals, helped to teach people how to speak, and gave useful advice as regards the dresses. A few days before the play was ready for production her mother died. The first performance was regarded by the Players almost as a memorial service, and one old man asked if he might stand in the crowd in order to show his respect. She thought that the circumstances under which the first production was given had had a very great effect on the spirit in which the plays had been given ever since. A comparison had been drawn with the Passion Plays at Ober Ammergau. She thought that the comparison was a fair one. The plays were treated as a serious matter; there was no joking or trifling at the performances and no jealousy, but rather a spirit of loyalty to the community. She thought that a tradition had now been built up."

323. "At first she had the idea of limiting the performers to students attending the University Extension Course, but this had not proved practicable, so she asked the village choral society to co-operate by chanting Greek choruses. The music was very simple and was written by herself. They were sung in unison, unaccompanied. The village choral society was composed of women, and they

asked if their husbands could come. She supposed that the proportion of villagers and people from outside taking part was now about equal. The village provided the crowd, some of the chorus, and some of the important speaking parts. Every year more of the principal parts were taken by villagers. Very little was cut in the plays, and they were given again and again. The *Hippolytus* had been given in five or six seasons, the *Iphigenia in Tauris* in four seasons, and the *Trojan Women* and *Oedipus Rex* twice each. Over forty performances had been given in all. People did not always take the same parts when the same plays were given again. The costumes were very simple. Every year a few were added, so that they had now a large collection."

324. "Anyone who wished could join the Players, and their ages varied from 74 to 3. She did not attempt to dictate every gesture or intonation, but she trained them to speak and to act intelligently. A great many people were most unwilling to have a speaking part, but were very glad to stand in the crowd. There was no difficulty in getting people to take part. She had always been able to get as many as she needed without any trouble. Even though in the summer the boys and men were usually occupied in playing cricket and gardening in the evenings, yet all whom she invited came to rehearsals. The Greek plays were usually given towards the end of the school term and just before the harvest. Shakespeare and modern plays were given during the winter in a small barn made into a theatre in the village."

325. "About 70 people took part in the Greek plays and about 300 came to each of the performances. There were four or five performances every year. They were held in the evening or on Saturday or early closing day. This year two plays were being given. At first the plays had been given out of doors, but now they were given in a covered yard, used for cattle in the winter and cleared for the performances of the plays in the summer. At the

back of the yard there was a barn or threshing floor, which served for a temple or an inner sanctuary. No charge was made for admission but a collection was taken. She thought that the atmosphere was rather different if there was no charge for seats. Moreover no names were printed on the programmes, and the Press was asked to respect their desire to remain anonymous. She feels this to be an important matter, as it contributed to the entire absence of jealousy and hurt feelings, and the very abundant comradeship and good feeling which characterised the Players."

326. "When they first began, visits were paid to the British Museum to enable the Players to study Greek statues and vases, to see how sandals should be made, what sort of spears and shields should be used, how to put on their clothes and how to do their hair. This had proved of great interest."

327. "She did not wish to suggest that the villagers preferred Greek tragedy to modern comedy. They liked any good play if it was well acted, and they greatly enjoyed *Much Ado about Nothing* and *As You Like It*. But the actors got far less tired of frequent rehearsals of a Greek play, than of a modern one. And many of them could not take part in any other sort of play, as they had no desire to have a speaking part. She thought that the tragedy of the plays had a great appeal. The Gilbert Murray translations were very rhythmic and the sound carried people away. She thought that the village found the plays easier to understand than Shakespeare plays. Taking part in the crowd of a play, without the responsibility of a speaking part, was very attractive to the village. She found it difficult to understand how people were willing to undergo the physical fatigue of standing in the crowd for hours after their day's work. People who had done other plays were glad to take part again in the Greek plays. She had in mind a boy who had played Dogberry and was very glad to be a herdsman in the *Iphigenia in*

*Tauris* ; also a woman who belonged to the local Women's Institute, and preferred to take part in the Greek play rather than in the modern plays which were given by the Institute. She wished that better modern plays for villages could be found. The mistress-and-servant play did not appeal. She thought that people liked to dress up. In order to succeed in a village, a play must be simple in appeal and deal with great fundamental emotions. The characters also must be simple, but not silly. She thought that other types of play were of little value to the village player and were possibly deleterious. There was plenty of live stuff in the village waiting to be dramatised. Nearly every village had some historical incident of note. Perhaps the secret of the success of Greek plays was their strong, direct emotional quality, which was to some extent akin to a religious appeal. In the days when drama was universal in English villages, it dealt with religious conceptions. This was true of Greek tragedy."

328. Miss Wastell, the postmistress of West Hoathly, who has taken part in the plays since their inception in 1910, and has never missed a rehearsal, also gave evidence before us. She said that "she did not think that the village would ever lose interest in the plays. She thought that the beauty and sadness of the plays made a particular appeal. There was as much tragedy as comedy in village life, and people saw in the plays ideas which they had felt but had never been able to express. She thought that even more than the beauty of ideas they were attracted by the beauty of the language and the sense of rhythm. The blacksmith's wife always came in her bath-chair and had never yet missed a performance, although she was delicate. She remembered that an old man taking part had sobbed during the final scene of the *Oedipus* although he had been to every rehearsal."

329. The plays presented by the Stoneland Players in July 1925 were *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Oedipus Rex*. The Players have paid visits to London and elsewhere to

give performances, and to see a Greek play done by a professional company. Mrs. Godwin King was inclined to deprecate these visits, as she found that they were apt to destroy the simplicity which characterised their performances in Sussex. The same view was put before us by Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth. "When village performances are brought to town the result is sometimes disappointing, and I believe it to be true that the best village drama depends as much for its perfection on the 'village atmosphere' as a first class London production depends on the atmosphere of a Metropolitan Playhouse. This is as it should be, and the limitations of a village performance should never be regarded as a drawback but rather as a condition from which a peculiar and individual beauty may be obtained—a beauty not obtainable in any other surroundings." In this view we concur.

### *Shoreham Village Players.*

330. We have so far described individual societies which have won considerable distinction in the presentation of an ambitious type of play. The work of these societies is of great interest in that it demonstrates how high a standard can be reached, but it is of course not typical of the hundreds of village societies which are to be found in the countryside. These societies vary in type. Some have attempted Shakespeare. We received a very favourable account of a performance of *The Taming of the Shrew* in a Cambridgeshire village. Another interesting example of a village society is the Shoreham Village Players, founded in 1924 by Mr. Harold Copping and Mr. H. R. Barbor, who has been so good as to give us an interesting account of their work. After the building of a public hall in the village a few of the residents associated themselves in a small provisional committee with a view to forming a village drama society. A meeting was held, and was addressed by Lord Dunsany who consented to become President. Some eighty residents of the parish were enrolled and Mr. Barbor was invited to produce *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Volunteers were

enrolled for acting, the designing and making of costumes, scenery and properties, and business management. Serious work began in the autumn of 1924. It was at one time considered that a single performance would suffice, but later, in order to provide effective understudying, it was decided to hold two performances and to give an opportunity to all who rehearsed to appear in one or other of the casts. The demand for seats was, however, such that it became necessary to give six performances during the winter and two in the summer, of which one was an open-air performance in the grounds of Dunstall Priory. Requests for performances were made by neighbouring towns and villages. Owing to technical difficulties these could not be met, but it is hoped that these difficulties may be overcome in future productions.

331. The Players are organised on a democratic basis, the great majority being local tradesmen and agricultural and other workers. The part of Quince was, for instance, played alternately by a local haulage contractor and one of the village grocers, Lysander and Demetrius by a civil engineer, an innkeeper and a carpenter, and Duke Theseus by Mr. Geering, the proprietor of a three hundred year old butcher's shop. Oberon fell to the son of a local innkeeper and the parts of Egeus and Titania to Mr. Draffin, a tailor, and his daughter.

332. The village school took part in the production, the boys building a fine apron stage to enable the small and inadequate platform to be used in the manner of the Elizabethan theatre, while a chorus of singers was drawn from the school, and a number of small children were cast for the singing and dancing fairies. The village School-master was musical director and played Mendelssohn's Incidental Music on the piano, being assisted by instrumentalists from the village band.

Mr. Barbor informs us that "the dramatic moves, s indeed, even in this short time, become



integral part of the life of the hamlet. Elizabethan English and Shakespearean imprecations have become current parlance in the district. So great is the enthusiasm that often, where two or three are gathered together in the local inns or club, a spontaneous rehearsal begins."

334. No sooner was *A Midsummer Night's Dream* produced than arrangements were made for the presentation of that fine comedy of Elizabethan England, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* by Thomas Dekker, a contemporary of Shakespeare, and the play, which has not been seen on the London stage since the Seventeenth century, is at the moment of writing in active rehearsal. It is found difficult to get together a complete company for rehearsal during the summer months owing to the agricultural pursuits of many of the participants, but by dividing the play into sections it has been found possible to carry on during the fruit-picking, harvest and holiday seasons.

335. While in its early stages the society has been primarily concerned with these two Elizabethan productions, it is not proposed to limit the activities to works of this kind, but it is hoped also, as funds and membership permit, to develop lectures, debates, play-readings, a theatrical library, and similar contingent activities in connection with the Shoreham Village Players. Folk-music and folk-dance are also receiving the attention of the membership, and suggestions have been made for a future production embracing, beside one-act plays, revivals of local folk-art, the old festivities of hop-picking and Harvest-Home collected from the memory and records of the village, in short, to develop an entirely new type of rustic revue. It is also felt advisable to endeavour to extend the open-air work of the society during the forthcoming season, and the possibility of producing *As You Like It* has been mooted. Future plans will depend however very largely on the success of the play now in preparation. For the purpose of *The Shoemaker's Holiday*

a variant of the triple stage convention of the Elizabethan Theatre has been designed by the producer, Mr. Barbor, and costumes adapted and brought into line with the needs of the Dekker drama from the paintings and drawings of Albrecht Dürer are being carried out by Mr. Copping.

### *Other Village Societies.*

336. We received also an account of a remarkable venture in a very remote parish in the north of England where the local Players have presented Shakespeare, Synge, Arnold Bennett, Galsworthy and Shaw. Many difficulties had to be surmounted before *You Never can Tell* could be given. We read that on one occasion "eight to ten inches of a snow had an unfavourable effect on the rehearsal" and on another "Finch McComas three quarters of an hour late, because a cow was down with milk fever." The play performed in 1925 was *Candida*. Dramatic appreciation in this neighbourhood seems to have reached a high level. We read also "Into this village recently strayed a luckless touring company playing *East Lynne*. The village turned up *en masse* but disconcerted the players by rocking with laughter all the way through the play."

337. We have described at some length instances of the production of excellent plays in villages, because of the extraordinary delusion which appears to be prevalent as to the intelligence of the countryman. This has led to the publication of a series of feeble little farces which are supposed to be specially adapted for village production, and it is a matter for regret that these farces are occasionally imposed on villages by people suffering from this delusion. We are convinced from a mass of evidence that capacity for appreciation of the best in drama is as high in the countryside as in towns and probably higher, and that the vogue of these trivial farces is due solely to the fact that the village has never been given the opportunity of producing anything better.

338. This point was made very admirably in a memorandum which came into our hands bearing on its cover a passage from *St. Joan*.

"*Ladvenu*. My Lord: what she says is, God knows, very wrong and shocking; but there is a grain of worldly sense in it such as might impose on a simple village maiden.

*Joan*. If we were as simple in the village as you are in your courts and palaces, there would soon be no wheat to make bread for you."

### *The Village Drama Society.*

339. We are glad therefore to be able to record that, in addition to the British Drama League, there are two societies of great influence in the countryside which endeavour to eliminate the feeble little farce and to set a high standard in the choice of play. The Village Drama Society has 150 branches and is in touch with more than 2,000 villages.

340. The work of the Society was carried on for some years by Miss M. E. Kelly and Miss D. Kelly in North Devonshire, but recently the headquarters of the Society has been moved to 15 Peckham Road, Camberwell, London, S.E.5. Miss M. E. Kelly was good enough to give us an account of the Society's many activities, which we reproduce.

341. "We are a society that works for the country entirely; we make a constant study of the powers of the country actors, and of the understanding and appreciation of country audiences, and experiment in many different forms of drama. We find the greatest enthusiasm for the drama prevailing in all parts of the country, and in every type of village, and we are anxious to lead this new art of the country into a direction in which it can really grow and flourish, becoming a genuine and sincere expression of the artistic feeling of the country. This task is an extremely difficult and responsible one, but, to those who know and love the country people, it is one that is intensely interesting and inspiring. We do not wish to make the villages imitate

a more sophisticated form of drama than they can really understand, and we do not wish to force them to revive any form of art that is naturally dead; we wish to take them where they stand at the present moment, and to give this art room to grow. It is impossible to generalise on the subject of villages, since in various parts, and with various occupations, the people vary enormously in outlook, yet, for the most part, the villages are at a transition stage, half awake to the outer life of the world, and still deeply imbued at heart with the tremendous force of tradition; the elementary education has robbed them of much of the old natural wisdom of the country folk, and has caused them to despise old customs and traditions, so that there is a great gulf between the old people in the country and the younger generation. A further education should develop the powers of appreciation in the young, and help to bridge the gulf, and already the dramatic societies have helped considerably to do this in many villages. We always recommend that these dramatic clubs should include men and women of all ages, and since in any artistic occupation talent alone gives place, these clubs lead to a greater friendship and respect for each other's powers than has been known before, and they bring the people of a village together in an artistic and intellectual occupation in a manner that is almost entirely new. We always urge co-operation in every detail of production, in order that every sort of talent may be used as far as possible, but implicit obedience to the producer."

342. "We suggest that our branches should take their plays to other villages, and do all that they can to help other villages to start clubs for themselves; and the villages of to-day are not quite so self-contained or narrowly patriotic as they have been in the past, so that many are beginning to do this; and by joining them where we can, into one big Society, we also help to break down that old barrier between one village and another, and give all some standard to work for. We do not interfere with the branches, and make no rules for them; they are entirely self-governing,

and they help us by every experiment that they make; we ask only that they shall always do the best play possible to their present development, and that they shall send us a report each year."

343. "We stand in the background to help them as far as possible in every difficulty. The Lending Library is intended first for the help of village producers and local playwrights, and the books are collected mainly for those purposes. The Costume Cupboard provides them at an extremely low rate with correct and good costumes, in beautiful colours, and in materials that hang in good folds; the dresses are not ornate, and do not depend for their effect on rich materials or tinsel. We have a special system for helping the villages to study costume for themselves if they wish to do so. We have a Reading Committee that is kept busy criticising plays for amateur playwrights, which it does at present free; on their recommendation we publish plays from time to time, and have now brought out eight plays of different types. We send speakers to the villages to give addresses on the drama, or to help them to form dramatic societies for themselves."

344. "As regards the plays that we accept for recommendation to the villages, we are trying to collect drama that can really be appreciated and understood in the villages, and our branches keep us constantly in touch with possibilities in the various types of village; generally speaking we find that the following types of drama make most appeal:—

Short comedies, preferably of village life, for few characters.

Religious drama, the first step towards serious drama of any sort, especially the Nativity plays, which are acted all over the country.

Long story-plays, that are in demand particularly in the villages of the north. These plays should be full of action, the characterisation should be clearly drawn, but should not be too complex; and costume plays are preferred above any others.

Symbolic outdoor plays. Such subjects as Harvest, the Earth, the Seasons, etc., are very much appreciated by an audience whose livelihood depends on them.

Operettas in the musical parts of the country

As a rule the village prefers to get out of its own life, and to use it only in comedy ; rural tragedies are not in demand at all."

345. In giving oral evidence before us Miss Kelly qualified the last statement by saying that the villages much disliked tragedies except in Wales, and expressed the opinion that the general aptitude for the drama was greater in Wales than in England. The Society has a Welsh Reading Committee, and in their list of recommended plays are 52 examples of Welsh drama, the great majority being written in the Welsh language. She also mentioned the great popularity of the plays specially published by the Society which deal with incidents in the Old Testament and the Pilgrim's Progress and are written in the language of the Bible.

346. In the List of Plays just mentioned there are divisions "For advanced players," "For players of some experience" and "For beginners." We are inclined to think that some of the plays in the last category are not worth the attention of village players. We are bound to mention also that other evidence which we received did not altogether confirm Miss Kelly's views as to the type of play most popular in the countryside. As regards the popularity of tragedies for instance her evidence is in direct conflict with that of the Arts League of Service, which has great experience in all parts of England. At the same time we regard the record of the Village Drama Society, which is due in such large measure to the devoted work of Miss Kelly, as worthy of high praise.

*The National Federation of Women's Institutes.*

347. Miss Kelly mentioned in her evidence that generally when an application came from a village for assistance it

was in connection with the local Women's Institute. The National Federation has recently appointed a special Drama Sub-Committee to further the drama in Women's Institutes. Already many of the Institutes have given plays and some of the County Federations have held Dramatic Festivals and Competitions. The East Sussex Federation for instance recently held a Drama Competition. There were three classes (i) Selected scenes from Shakespeare ; (ii) *The Panic* (scene from *Cranford*) and a scene from *She Stoops to Conquer* ; (iii) Original Plays. Seven Institutes entered for the first and eleven for the second class. There were five original plays, each written and produced by Institute members. We are informed that the winning play showed great feeling for local colour and a real touch of tragedy. The Wiltshire and West Kent Federations have produced Pageants of Local History, and similar Pageants on a smaller scale have been attempted by individual Institutes. The Oxfordshire Federation has held two successful Shakespeare competitions. We are informed that some of the Institutes found great difficulty in giving parts to all who wished to act. One Institute with forty would-be actors could find no scene in Shakespeare into which they could all be fitted. In general the evidence of the Federation confirm a previous conclusion reached by us as to the great value of Dramatic Competitions and Festivals.

348. We are glad to hear that many village institutes are now designed in such a way as to make possible the presentation of plays under satisfactory conditions.

## C.—CRITICISM.

## XI.—DRAMA AS AN INSTRUMENT OF EDUCATION.

*Wide appeal.*

349. The situation existing to-day has been set out, and the views of our witnesses have been brought together. Our next step, as indicated in an earlier paragraph, will be an attempt to bring together the various issues raised by our witnesses with a view to ascertaining what are the elements in the situation, which all persons interested in Education must desire to encourage and support.

350. The first conclusion suggested by the evidence is that there is no section of the community to which the drama has not an immediate and compelling appeal.

351. When this element of attraction is considered in connection with an earlier conclusion reached by us, in considering the drama as a form of art, that it is at once a most vivid and most subtle artistic medium, and therefore a powerful instrument for the conveyance of ideas, it becomes apparent that the conditions under which drama is presented are a matter of the greatest importance to all who are interested in Education. In drama we find an instrument which can be directed to the highest ends, and to the lowest.

352 It is therefore very satisfactory to note that associations such as the British Drama League, the Arts League of Service and the Village Drama Society are engaged in encouraging a high standard in the choice of plays, and in other elements of play production, and that associations, whose primary aims are social and educational, have recognised in the drama an instrument of Education, and are active in promoting the same high standard in their local branches. It is clear also that in many societies of which we have given an account the conditions are such that the drama is proving of the highest educational value.



*Choice of plays.*

353. We will endeavour to set out the considerations which appear to us to make the work of the societies in question so valuable. The first, and perhaps the most important, lies in the choice of play. We think that the evidence quoted demonstrates that the character of play produced by the better type of dramatic society is very high, much higher in fact than that prevailing in the commercial theatre either in London or in the provinces.

354. One remarkable feature is the popularity of the Greek play. Many schools in which Greek forms part of the curriculum have presented Greek plays for many years. But we have found that the Greek play has a much wider appeal. Miss Sybil Thorndike has presented these plays in the West End of London, and Miss Lilian Baylis at "The Old Vic." A Greek Play Society has recently been formed in London with a view to presenting translations of Greek plays in a manner approximating as nearly as practicable to the original methods of production. We find the Birmingham Playgoers giving the *Electra*, the Regent Street Polytechnic *The Trojan Women*, the Maddermarket Theatre at Norwich the *Hippolytus*, *Electra* and *Alcestis*, the Folk House, Bristol, the Mary Ward Settlement and the Sheffield Educational Settlement the *Andromache*, and many other instances. Mr. Sharwood Smith says that the poor people in the neighbourhood of his school "would not miss a Greek play for worlds." We find in a little village in Sussex the yearly presentation of two plays by Mrs. Godwin King and the Stoneland Players, and the study of Greek drama in Miss West's Tutorial Class at Woking culminating in a performance of the *Antigone* at the "Old Vic."

355. Mr. Sharwood Smith attributes the appeal of Greek plays to their austerity and to the beautiful convention of the chorus. Mrs. Godwin King attributes their success to the "strong, direct, emotional quality, to some extent akin to a religious appeal." Miss Wastell, a member of her company, thought that the "beauty and sadness" of the plays made

a partienlar appeal to the village people, and that "even more than by the beauty of ideas they were attracted by the beauty of language and the sense of rhythm." Miss West spoke of her class at Croydon returning from modern plays to Greek "finding them more interesting and on a bigger scale."

356. The popularity of the Greek play appears to us to be one of the happiest features of the new dramatic movement. Much of the credit for making the great masterpieces the property not of the scholar only, but of the people in general, is due to Professor Gilbert Murray to whose translations many of our witnesses paid a tribute with which we are glad to associate ourselves.

357. Another constant feature among the productions of the societies which we have mentioned is the Shakespeare play. There appears to be hardly any society of repute which does not give Shakespeare a prominent place. The importance of this feature needs little comment from us. We have already mentioned in connection with the evidence of Miss Baylis that Shakespeare never fails in his appeal to a popular audience. This is corroborated by the continued existence of the New Shakespeare Company and of the professional touring companies such as those of Sir Frank Benson, Mr. Ben Greet, Mr. Marsh and Mr. Baynton. The people cannot therefore be said to have been altogether starved of the work of the greatest of dramatists. But the new movement in drama has brought many thousands more in touch with his work and has given them the greater insight, conferred by actual participation in the plays, into their unsurpassed beauty of language, their high philosophy and revelation of human character and motives. On this account alone the new movement is entitled to the highest regard as an instrument of education.

358. One of our witnesses made a further suggestion with regard to Shakespeare productions. He pointed out that a modern play had generally very few characters,

little scenery, no music, and no dancing, while everyday costumes could be worn. The number of people interested in the production was consequently very few, and no one had any part in the production unless he could act. On the other hand a Shakespeare play had a great number of parts, and gave scope for musicians, singers, folk-dancers, craftsmen and dressmakers. He recommended Shakespeare productions on this account, apart from any other quality in the plays, and we are disposed to agree with his view.

359. The popularity of Shakespeare is extended in some degree to Sheridan. But with this exception the eighteenth century play does not often find its way into the programme of these societies.

360. Sir Barry Jackson in giving evidence before us expressed the opinion that amateur societies were much more successful in the presentation of old plays than in modern plays. He did not suggest they should confine their attention to Shakespeare, but advocated the claim of plays which are less often seen such as *Ralph Roister Doister*, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and the old Ballad Operas.

361. The information at our disposal does not enable us to give any definite opinion on the artistic merit of these operas. But we consider that the revival of interest in folk songs is in every way to be desired. Moreover we agree with Sir Barry Jackson that, as amateur societies are reasonably sure of their audience, they are in a position, and should be encouraged, to experiment in plays and dramatic forms, the presentation of which the commercial theatre is disinclined to risk.

362. The evidence of the Unnamed Society gives point to Sir Barry Jackson's suggestion that amateur societies represent an admirable field for experiment. This society not only puts on new plays, but makes experiments in dramatic forms, scenery and stage-craft. We consider enterprises of this character highly desirable.

363. We welcome also another activity of the societies of which we have given an account, namely the presentation of the type of play which is now commonly known as the "play of ideas." The great vogue of Shaw among amateur societies in industrial areas is clearly indicated by the evidence. Ibsen enjoys popularity in a lesser degree, but at any rate in a higher degree than in the commercial theatre. In making this comment we do not wish to enter into the old controversy as to the comparative merits between the "play of ideas" and other plays. We confine ourselves to expressing pleasure that the efforts of amateur societies have brought the "play of ideas" before a wider public.

364. We are impressed also by the great popularity among these societies of the imaginative plays of Dunsany, Synge, Lady Gregory, Yeats and the Irish School of dramatists, and of the English poetical drama of Masefield, Drinkwater, Lascelles Abercrombie and Gordon Bottomley. It is a matter for satisfaction that owing to amateur effort these plays have been witnessed by thousands who would not otherwise have had the opportunity of seeing them.

365. While commending the presentation of poetical drama by amateurs, we must pay a special tribute to the work of Mr Rutland Boughton at Glastonbury in developing a music-drama, drawn from the well springs of our national art, our folk music, miracle plays and Elizabethan madrigals. The Glastonbury Festival Players and the Hardy Players have exceptional good fortune in that they are able to present new plays of acknowledged excellence under the direction of the author. But we commend also the work of other societies which, though lacking the exceptional good fortune of the Glastonbury and Hardy Players, have attempted work on the same lines. We attach great importance to the presentation of plays designed to revive interest in local tradition, customs and dialect.

369. Another type of play, of whose value we hold a high opinion, is the play designed to give a knowledge of the ideals and aspirations of other countries, and embodying their folk lore and music. Citizen House, Bath, has made a particular point of these plays. Sir Barry Jackson attached great importance to the presentation of *Abraham Lincoln* at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. He thought that it made for happier international relations when the greatest American subject was made the hero of a play by an English dramatist. Miss Baylis has also expressed her belief that people who will not read the literature of other countries will go to its plays and that a policy of exchange in the best dramatic productions of different countries would have a great influence in the promotion of better international relations. The "Old Vic" Company which played in Brussels in 1921 on the invitation of the Belgian Minister of Fine Arts received a great welcome. We are glad to learn that the World Association for Adult Education has formed a Committee one of whose objects will be the formation of play-reading groups as a means of understanding foreign literature and life, and the encouragement in each country of the presentation of translations of foreign plays.

370. While we recommend the presentation of plays designed to give a knowledge of other countries, we attach equal, if not greater, importance to plays which may induce a desire to study the history and traditions of our own country. We do not refer only to Shakespeare's *Histories* and plays of the same type. In passing we may however observe that there are elements in these plays whose importance in education is often greatly underestimated. We refer to the elements of romance and tradition. It is a common fashion to deride these and to suggest that they induce affectation and false sentiment. We are inclined to think that a life of courage, endeavour and self-sacrifice has often taken its first inspiration from the "high heart, high speech, high deeds mid honouring eyes" of a romantic novel or play. Moreover, such plays

often induce a desire to study history. We attach, however, as much importance to plays containing incidents in local history and those which throw light on the development of social conditions.

371. It is much to be regretted that the inhabitants of great cities know so little of their local history. The drama is an effective means of stimulating a desire for knowledge. Sir Barry Jackson attached great importance to this point, and instanced the case of Falstaff and Sutton Coldfield which is now a suburb of Birmingham. As regards the development of social conditions Professor Allardyce Nicoll writes:—"There is no surer way of indicating the spirit of different generations than the reading or the seeing of plays. Etherege's *The Man of Mode*, Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*, Lillo's *George Barnwell*, Colman's *The Iron Chest*, Pinero's *Sweet Lavender*, Shaw's *Widower's Houses*—to take only a few examples—would give a student a much more perfect and concrete picture of the development of social ideals from 1670 to 1900 than could be obtained in any other way. In this connection, of course, the minor plays are of as great importance as, if not of greater importance than, the acknowledged dramatic masterpieces."

372. The types of play which we have commended represent a considerable part of the programme of nearly all the societies which we have described as representing the new dramatic movement. We regard the fact of their presentation as entitling these societies to the claim that their work is of high educational value. Another feature which we note with great pleasure is that these societies, while maintaining a consistent high standard, do not confine themselves to one or two of the types of play which we have mentioned, but observe a commendable variety in their choice of plays. We find for instance in the productions and play readings of the Oxted and Limpsfield Players two Greek plays, one Morality, eleven Shakespeare, two Sheridan, one Goldsmith, one Tolstoi, two Ibsen, five Shaw, two Granville-Barker, three Galsworthy, two St.

John Ervine, two Stanley Houghton, two Dunsany, and one each of Synge, Drinkwater, Arnold Bennett, St. John Hankin, H. A. Jones and Somerset Maugham.

373. We have already given some indication of the type of play, the presentation of which by amateurs we deprecate and are unable to regard as of educational value. We stated that many of our witnesses were emphatic that the bane of the amateur movement was its association with the idea of a social function and the inadequate imitation of the West End success. The comedies and farces presented in the West End require high technical accomplishment in acting, which is rarely possessed by an amateur. Their educational content is often negligible. Agreeing with these views, we deliberately excluded from our investigations the type of dramatic society which comes under that condemnation, with the exception of some which, while giving inadequate performances of West End successes, were drawn from many social grades. In such circumstances work of some importance has been achieved in the establishment of friendly relations. From an educational standpoint we can find no other justification for their existence.

374. We feel some doubt about another type of play which appears very popular, the dramatised scene from a famous novel. Miss Margaret Macnamara writes, "I have read numbers of dramatisations of scenes and have carefully observed the effect on audiences of such scenes with the result that I am sure they are not satisfactory as material. A play needs a beginning, a middle and an end. Further every line needs to be written for acting. Somebody said "a sonnet must be born a sonnet." Any given story may be used for a play, but it needs to be reborn. The approach to a scene from a great novel is necessarily humble, and one must not be humble towards one's material."

375. Another type of play in regard to which doubt has been expressed is the propaganda play. We have already expressed the opinion that the drama is a powerful instrument

for the conveyance of ideas. It is this circumstance no doubt which has prompted the numerous suggestions which have recently been made for the production of plays designed either to expose the fallacies of capitalism or to emphasise the unquestionable character of its benefits. We consider that dramatic societies are ill-advised to put on any play in which propaganda is the primary, and dramatic interest the secondary, consideration.

376. The choice of play seems to us a matter of the greatest importance in the consideration of dramatic production as an educational instrument. Through the study of great plays a man is enabled to live on terms of intimacy with some of the master minds of this and other ages. It is the great play, whether it be Tragedy or Comedy, which justifies the high claims made by our witnesses in regard to drama as a form of art quoted in an earlier part of our report. It will be remembered that Sir Barry Jackson claimed that drama taught humanity to what it should aspire and what it should cast aside as base and worthless, and that Mr. Granville-Barker spoke of "the pictured struggle and reconciliation of human wills and ideas" and of the response to the fine mind of the poet. Miss Constance Smedley writes "Drama is an effective instrument of education only as it directs thought away from personal emotions, opinions, and photographic mimicry of the trivial and unessential in life, to the fundamental laws which make for beauty, order, and harmony in life, whether by bringing out the failures consequent on unobservance of the laws, or the effects of their observance." We wish to add however that while Miss Smedley's statement appears to us admirably to express the content of a great play, we consider that plays possessing qualities other than those which she regards as essential can be of great value in the development of the individual.

### *The Art of Acting.*

377. The choice of play has an importance not only from the point of view of its moral and intellectual content.



It is of great importance in considering the art of acting and of the conditions under which this art may have the most beneficial effect. We have constantly expressed the opinion that the study of good plays can best be undertaken by actual participation in them. The greatest insight into the mind of the dramatist is obtained in the attempt to represent the characters created by him. The art of acting, Mr. Granville-Barker said, is the art of interpretation. No man could fail to derive great benefit from an attempt to interpret the part of Othello. But could he obtain any benefit from an attempt to represent a trivial character in a feeble farce? Might not he in identifying himself with such a character derive positive harm?

378. This question was raised at the Conference on New Ideals in Education held at Stratford-on-Avon in 1922. Mr. F. M. Cornford put one point of view. He said:—*"Plato saw that, among all the engines of moral training, dramatic representation is the most powerful, whether for good or for harm, because it entails, at least in the case of children, a sympathetic identification with ideal characters, noble or base, and the awakening, in some degree and kind, of the passions that spin the plot of human life. I have read that professional actors can inhibit the actual experience of the passions they represent, that they can make themselves the instruments giving out a music they neither hear nor feel. Perhaps some of the actors present will tell us if this is true. I suspect that it applies only to the time of performance. When an actor is studying a part, does he not enter into it as far as his nature will carry him? Be that as it may, at any rate the child and the amateur player have not the skill to counterfeit the expression of emotions without experiencing them."*

379. Miss Lena Ashwell replied at a later session:—*"It was asked whether an actor when depicting a character became, as it were, the character—took on the evil character*

of the villain I suppose every artist is surprised then these questions arise. We all imagine that other people's minds work very much as ours do, and it is a discovery for us when we find that they don't. An actor in studying a part in his own room may go through all the emotions which he is about to portray, to try to get into the feeling of the character. He will sob, cry, break down, have a paroxysm of emotion in finding his connection with the character, the sympathetic chord which enables him to get 'into the skin' of the part. But if he is a professional actor and an artist he will never when playing that part allow his personality to be submerged by it. One side of him stands apart, whilst the other side of him is depicting the character. He is projecting something from his mentality on to the screen of his personality, he is not absorbing something into his mentality which might destroy him. If an actor allows himself to lose control of the art he is using, if his art takes on a personal outlook and he allows his own personal suffering or his private grievances to enter into the emotion of the part, he will destroy the illusion completely. The audience will experience discomfort immediately because they are conscious at once that the actor has changed from an actor representing someone else's suffering into a sufferer unburdening himself in public. Real tears, real temper, real laughter are not art. The 'mirror up to Nature' is broken."

380. We are disposed to think that this discussion emphasises the importance of choosing a play which has in it the elements of beauty, order and harmony. The effect of participation in such a play is profound and may enrich the whole life. Sir Barry Jackson in describing a performance of *Twelfth Night* by some boys from an elementary school said that "he could not describe it as a good performance. It was very ingenuous. But the point was that it was sincere and that the actors carried into their own homes the poetry and character of the parts which they had played."

381. The same point is made by a representative of this Committee who attended a competition for amateur societies held under the auspices of the British Drama League. He writes "In a sense, I suppose, these were picked societies, as they had come through the qualifying rounds, and had reached the last nine. The quality of the acting was remarkable and received very high praise from the judge. The last performance of the evening was the Trial Scene from *The Merchant of Venice*, and I was amazed by the extraordinary force and sincerity of Shylock. There were other scenes in which both the acting and the production generally were most impressive, in particular scenes from the *Andromache*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The School for Scandal*. But my amazement was greatest when at the end of the evening I was given a list of the societies taking part. *The Merchant of Venice* had been produced by a boys' club in one of the worst parts of the East End, and the Shylock who had so thrilled me was a boy of 16. The *Andromache* had been given by a working girls' club in a very poor neighbourhood. And I thought of these boys and girls taking into their poor homes the beauty and splendour of two of the world's greatest masterpieces, and of all that it must mean in the enrichment of their lives. If I had any doubt as to the power of the drama as an instrument of education in its highest sense, it was resolved that evening."

382. Sir Barry Jackson mentioned the importance of sincerity in acting by amateurs. Mr. Nugent Monck mentioned this point also in his evidence. He said "I ask of my actors sincerity. I require them to study the play with a view to finding out what the author meant and try to instil in them the capacity to reproduce the emotion which they first felt when reading the part. I never allow anyone to express an emotion which he has not felt." The sincerity of an amateur performance often atones in a great measure for deficiencies in technique and finish. In a note on "The Art of Rehearsal," written by Mr. Bernard Shaw, there is a passage bearing on this point

office at the age of seventeen, I had the additional schooling to be derived from three winters' attendance at an evening technical school."

386. "About this time a dawning interest in Sunday School work led me to take up other studies and to take part in the performance of short sketches and dramatic dialogues. I thus found my hobby and the pursuit of it has brought me into close and responsible touch with all kinds of dramatic ventures, both amateur and professional. I have written, produced and acted plays for such societies as The Stockport Garrick Society, The Huddersfield Thespians, The Leeds Art Theatre, The Leeds Industrial Theatre and the York Everyman Theatre. At the present moment I am busy with the preliminary organisation of a new amateur play-producing society to be known as the Leeds Civic Theatre "

387. "With regard to Education I note in my own experience three well-defined phases:—

*The acquirement of the fundamentals.* This phase coincides with my board school period. There we were taught, remorselessly and thoroughly, how to read, write and count. The method was often roundabout and lacking in subtlety but undoubtedly effective. It was a painful process of disillusion through which one passed later at the evening school where we were shown and, better still, encouraged to discover for ourselves, shorter and simpler methods, but the fact remains that the board school regime resulted in a thorough grounding in the fundamentals. Had my schooling stopped there it would have justified itself. It did not stop there, however, but insisted upon a common standard of miscellaneous odds and ends—most of them useless. For instance, it was obvious to the meanest intelligence that I had neither eye nor hand for "drawing," but this did not save me from punishment because my sketches were like nothing on earth or on the blackboard. It was patent to the most unmusical as soon as I lifted up my voice that I was no singer, but this did

not save me from punishment because there were notes in the 'piece' we were learning that were beyond my compass, or because, Trilby-like, I could not modulate accurately. On the contrary, the finest voice in the class was liable to be punished because he could not boast my skill in the recitation of verse. The fact was that the system aimed at an insane ideal of standardisation; variety in boyhood was a vice, apparently, to be exorcised at whatever cost (to the boy!). We were unhappily compressed to the 'happy mean.' Add to this the damning fact that much of the miscellaneous knowledge with which we were crammed was far in advance of our understanding and needs so that it was always either incomplete or distorted, and the case against the elementary school of my boyhood is complete."

388. "I believe that the mere acquirement of knowledge is of no value as an end in itself, that knowledge is more easily acquired as a bye-product of one's own originality and special turn of mind, and therefore, that the communal cramming of a fixed standard of any knowledge but that of the three R's is truly wasteful and may be frightfully impertinent."

389. "*Mental development.* This second phase, which coincides roughly with my three winters at the evening school, was much happier, and is best described as learning the 'why' of things rather than the 'how.' Here we were treated as individuals, and we had as teachers men who sought rest from the day-school drudgery in a freer, more human, discursive and conversational method of tuition. No digression was too long, no bypath too tortuous to be explored in company with, not ahead of, us. We were encouraged to think for ourselves and to follow our individual bent. This was a great advance on the standardised cramming of the board school, in fact, some of the lessons were little more than a disgorging of the indigestible cramming, or, to use a pleasanter simile, the dispensing of digestive medicine. The aim here was, first and foremost, mental

suppleness, and in attaining this result we not only acquired more real knowledge but assimilated it more naturally and completely."

390. "I believe that this process of individual training should begin as early as possible—judging from my observation of my own two children, it now begins much earlier than it did in my boyhood—but I believe the principle is still capable of extension. When I think how few of my working-class contemporaries enjoyed this second phase, I do not wonder at our general mental apathy."

391. "*Understanding and insight.* The third phase began with my interest in Sunday School work. It was more a matter of emotion than intellect, and more of the spirit than either. (I use the term 'spirit' without any theological or religious connotation.) It gave me a motive for life, a stimulus to service, and I began to perceive purpose and beauty dimly. The simile of an opening bud occurs to me. There was an emotional outlet. My subsequent development came as a matter of course. Only in the drama did I find the fullest scope for this vital activity and in the service of the drama I have acquired, as a bye-product, what real knowledge I possess and what real mental ability I exercise."

392. "In the course of my career as an actor and a dramatist I have met men of every class and kind, and I have noticed invariably that those who are most alive, those to whom life means the most, are neither the men who are walking encyclopedias of knowledge, nor those whose wits are the sharpest or whose brains the most supple. The best men, the happiest men, are those who, knowing much or little, quick in mind or pedestrian, labourers or professional, are men of understanding, sympathy and insight, who see life as a means of expression and service and therefore as a thing of infinite beauty and wonderful opportunity. I have met these men in every class. I have met their opposites in every class. And a study of them has always resulted in the discovery that

the difference is due to this spiritual rather than intellectual development."

393. "I believe that this education of the spirit is the real need of my own class to-day. Let other classes speak for themselves. I know what modern industry means in terms of monotonous routine tasks. I know what a working-class home-life means, with few outlets for emotional 'release' save the 'pub' and the 'chapel.' I know the mental apathy and the crippled spirit they engender. I have spent my life fighting against this state of mind and temper, both in myself and in my fellows. The working-man's first instinct is to distrust beauty when he is made to see it. Talk to him of what life means to you, and he will confide to his neighbour—behind your back—that you are a bit funny sometimes!"

394. "I therefore conclude that what the working-man needs to-day is not more cramming, but digestive medicine. Not more education but the vision to use what little education he already possesses. This is the essential. By all means let him have his clear path from the day-school to the university, but don't let it become, in the savage description of one working-man, a clear path from the cradle to the grave, for you may unfit him for the humdrum industrial life without finding for him that compensation which makes any life a matter for joy and gratitude. We are sour dough awaiting leaven. Give us the real education of an informed, sympathetic and vital spirit—the yeast of life which will transform the sour dough into living bread. And, incidentally, in the happiest easiest fashion, we shall, pursuing the one thing needful find all these other things, mere knowledge and intellectual equipment, added unto us."

395. "If education is release, the function of the drama is readily perceived. I cannot help noting the origin of Greek drama. It sprung out of religious and ceremonial rites the effect of which, speaking broadly, was the 'release' of emotion, an exercise of the spirit. The plays which sprung from these rites carried on this

essential service but gradually widened the scope, multiplied the occasions, and refined the qualities of this spiritual exercise. The development of our own drama from the monkish mysteries to the Elizabethan plays is, I think, a fair, if rough, analogy. This quality of 'release' is the mark of true drama, either comedy or tragedy, for laughter is 'release' as well as tears."

396. "This is not theory or hearsay, this dramatic 'release.' I have proved it myself and seen and helped others to prove it. I believe that the most valuable result of the work at the Industrial Theatre was that it allowed, nay demanded, that the workpeople-players should break their shells and 'come out of themselves.' This, to me, is the first and all-sufficient justification of the drama. Before a player can be anything but a stick he must try, at the cost of violence to his timid reserve, to become someone else. He must conquer his inbred repression, rouse his dormant spirit, practise insight and a sympathetic understanding of the 'other fellow,' and the pleasure of this, the freedom and relief it brings in its train, will result in the practice of the imaginative faculty off the stage as well as on. As one workman put it, 'It's no use trying to be somebody else unless you try to feel what he feels.' Another description of this sensation of release is most pithy. Said one of my actors in *The Merchant of Venice*, 'Eh, I've been miles away from myself to-night, and I feel pounds lighter for it.' "

397 We consider that little comment is necessary on Mr. Gregson's memorandum. His remarks on Elementary Education refer of course to an earlier period. Its sincerity carries with it conviction. The attraction of the drama is due in great measure to its provision of an element of emotional release; its great value in the intellectual and moral development of the individual is due in great measure to its gift of evoking imaginative sympathy.

398. This element of "release" is provided in equal measure by Comedy and Tragedy. Of its value in tragic circumstances we have already given some examples in the



evidence of Miss Baylis, who spoke of a man blinded in the War who found life intolerable until he was brought to a performance of *Mignon*, and of another man who found something in *Everyman* which gave him enough courage to live. Miss Lena Ashwell also spoke of the burning of the huts at Honfleur and of the playing of *Candida* which made all quiet again. Mr. Harold Gibson writes in his evidence "I lived in Moscow for a long time when the famine was at its worst and life in Moscow was a dreary and sordid thing. I found that the ballet, opera and drama were the three things which were preserving in Russian life some sense of the beautiful, and so saving the nation from being driven to complete hopelessness and despair."

399. We have quoted much evidence also in earlier parts of this report which bears out our conclusions on the subject both of emotional release and of imaginative sympathy, but we have particularly in mind the experiment in prisons. Our witness, it will be remembered, spoke of the wonderful influence of the drama on the prisoners. He suggested that plays provided a basis of common experience and common humanity which might bring about a greater understanding and sympathy between classes and heal social disorders which were so often caused by a failure to know each other. Miss Lena Ashwell has spoken also of the reconciling power of the theatre "where you can see that the same trials and troubles come alike to all sections of the community."

### *Speech and movement.*

400. We have spoken of the value of drama in evoking imaginative sympathy and in giving emotional release. We turn now to other elements, inherent in the art of acting and in dramatic production, which provide yet another explanation of its attraction and of its high value in the education and moral development of the individual. We refer to delight in speech, to the development of physical grace, and to the evocation of the creative instinct in the design of scenery, property and costumes. The attraction

which underlies these elements is in a large measure delight in rhythm in its various forms.

401. Speech training holds first place in the work of the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, and next to it comes training in rhythmic movement. As regards spoken English Miss Fogerty informed us that "she did not favour a uniform standard. She favoured at first an experimental standard based on the following considerations :—

(i) Perfect use of the organs of speech. This was physiological

(ii) General conformity to received standard. This was phonetic, and the standard was one approved by the International Phonetic Society.

(iii) Fitness for development for aesthetic purposes.

With the limitation of (i) and (ii) she had no objection whatsoever to dialect, regarded as a true variant speech. It was no use trying to impose a particular standard of English on people in different parts of the country. Dialect denoted a difference of mental content and often of racial structure. It was difficult to maintain the standard of a good dialect : as soon as dialect ceased to be spoken by educated people, it fell entirely into local accent and became the property of people who were not good speakers, and could not give it its full beauty. By "fitness for development for aesthetic purposes," she meant speech that could be used for diction, singing and public speaking. This consideration ruled out certain dialects. The Cockney "O" and Durham "U" were not suitable. If a man tried to sing these vowels he would find it very difficult to get a true note. He would always go out of tune."

402. Miss Fogerty informed us that the standard of the Central School had met with wide acceptance. Many actors of eminence had studied there, and teachers had been sent to many Schools and Training Colleges. The Scottish Association of Verse Speakers had accepted the

standard. As regards training in movement, the School holds classes in classical dancing, character dancing, and "old fashioned deportment." There are classes also in mime, crafts, costume, and scenic effect.

403. With regard to the Greenleaf Theatre Miss Smedley writes :—" In the Greenleaf Theatre, we have striven to discover and put into a form capable of popular comprehension, the fundamental laws of drama, seen as synthesised speech, movement and pattern, on a rhythmic basis. We start from the word and the picture ; where Dalcroze starts from music and plastic : Margaret Morris from dance : William Poel from the Elizabethan Stage. We are all moving towards the same goal : the restoration of rhythm as the greatest force in art. In the Greenleaf plays, simple ideas are worked out to their fullest powers of presentation by means of co-ordinated technical devices ; so that it is possible to practice definite processes of gesture and voice, uncomplicated by emotional situations. They are primary exercises, by no means easy to execute perfectly, and making great demands in the way of precision and control. Shakespeare, of course, was heir to the great rhythmic tradition of speech and movement handed down by minstrels and interlude players, who in their turn, had inherited the traditions of the Greek and Latin theatres."

404. Speech training is taught in many other institutions and in particular by the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, the Polytechnic School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art and by the Mary Ward Dramatic Art Centre. There are also associations of verse speakers which have done notable work in the same cause. We are glad to note that so much research is being conducted into the nature of speech, and so much effort being made to restore to the English people the pleasure in the colour and music of verse, which they once possessed. In the countryside some vestige of this delight in beautiful words beautifully spoken still remains. In the towns it has disappeared, and the drama can render the greatest service in restoring

it to us. We were glad to find in the evidence submitted to us how much importance was attached by dramatic societies to training in speech, and how often the stimulus to attending classes in elocution had been given by play production.

### *Folk Dancing.*

405. Miss Fogerty mentioned that classes in folk dancing were held in the Central School. Folk dancing in common with other forms of dance is a natural part of training in movement. Moreover in certain Shakespeare plays, and some other types of play, dances form an integral part, and dramatic societies are thus interested not infrequently in training their members in folk dancing.

406. At one time moreover there was a close relation between the sword dance and the folk play. The course of divergence between these is of great interest in a study of the development of the dramatic art. For these reasons we obtained a memorandum from the English Folk Dance Society, in which we found so much of interest that we venture to quote it in full. The memorandum states :—

407. "Folk Dance and Drama have a common ancestry. Both originate in the same nebula of observances connected with veneration of the annual cycle of nature's productivity. All over the world traces may be found of the same conviction of the primitive mind that you can make things happen by doing them yourself, from which arose the custom for some representative of the spirit of life in a community to be put through a pretended death and then to be restored to life. This is the basis of the sword dance and of the folk play."

408. "The course of divergence between folk dance and drama may be seen in a comparison of two forms which still survive in England, in Mummers' plays with vestiges of dancing, and in Sword dances with dramatic features, such as the introductory play, the mimic decapitation of the victim, and the preliminary calling-on scene."

which attributes an individuality to each dancer. There is indeed one surviving example in which dance and drama are equally balanced. As the differentiation of medium became complete, the drama passed out of the hands of the folk and became literary. It has thus attained its fullest development in the region of conscious art. Dance on the other hand, with its medium of pure movement, remained with the folk, whose aesthetic quality is an unconscious relation to their art, and with them developed into forms which can be favourably compared with the highest products of conscious art in the same medium. Probably, it has been said, no form of art has been carried so far along the road of development by the unaided efforts of the folk as that of the dance. It may be inferred therefore that Folk Dance is an art form in which those can excel to whom other forms of art cannot be readily adapted. It supplies them with a means of artistic self-expression, which they need for their natural satisfaction and development, and may not be able to obtain in other ways. That it can be a source of similar pleasure and profit to members of the more advanced strata of society is amply substantiated by the experience of the English Folk Dance Society since the revival."

499. "When Mr. Cecil Sharp began his work of discovery at the beginning of the century there were still surviving a few examples of each of the three principal forms of Folk Dance which have been evolved in England, the Sword Dance, the Morris Dance and the Country Dance. They were mostly moribund and it is probable that but for Mr. Sharp's opportune action they would have failed to outlive the war, and an important national art form would have been irretrievably lost."

510. "Having recorded and studied these surviving examples he was able to reconstruct others from the oral testimony of individual survivors and to interpret the otherwise obscure directions contained in Playford's 'Dancing Master.' This work passed through eighteen

editions between 1650-1728, and contains the tunes and choreographic descriptions of a great number of so-called Country Dances, which are in fact for the most part dances worked up with more or less conscious artistry from traditional materials."

411. "It is here desirable to give a brief description of the three types."

412. "The Sword Dance is the oldest and preserves the primitive features in their most obvious form. The English sword dance is found in the northern countries, and has no tangible connection with that of Scotland. It is performed by a number of men varying from five to eight, who dance in ring formation, each holding with his right hand the handle of one sword and with his left the point of another. Thus linked they go through a series of evolutions, which have the appearance of a single continuous movement, and finish with the swords locked in a polygonal pattern. As a rule the locked swords are held around the neck of one of the party, who then suffers the mimic decapitation."

413. "The Morris Dance, which is probably a derivative of the Sword Dance, flourished in the Midlands. It is performed by six men with bells on their shins and handkerchiefs or sticks in their hands and decorated uniformly with ribbons and rosettes according to tradition. The set of dancers works as a whole, though without being linked, and team work is of the first importance. The style is strenuous and virile; the evolutions are comparatively simple, but the steps and hand movements are highly developed."

414. "Sword and Morris Dances, unlike Country Dances, are essentially spectacular and were performed in public on special occasions, such as Whitt Monday. The different communities in which they flourished had their own 'traditions' and these 'traditions,' which were in a constant stage of evolution after the manner of all Folk

art forms, differ extensively in detail but conform to a common type and preserve many common features."

415 "The Country Dances which are still preserved are of a different character. Some were found by Mr. Sharp in a traditional form, but the majority are taken from Playford's collection mentioned above. Many of these dances have no doubt been consciously developed and adapted, but the ground work is unmistakably of Folk origin, and they can be recognised as belonging to the same stock and arising from the same impulses. They preserve the two universal formations of Folk ritual in the Processional or Longways formation and the circular formation in which the performers are centred upon some ritual object. The combination of men and women as partners led to the development of the country dance for social purposes, and it has flourished as much in the Assembly room as on the village green. The steps and movements are simple and elementary, and the dance consists of a variety of figures some of which are common to most dances. The range of this variety is very great and many of the figures are elaborate and of remarkable beauty. The fact that the couples are not exclusive, but are jointly concerned with other couples in the performance of the dance gives it a truly social character."

416. "The publications which preserve in a permanent form Mr. Sharp's work on these dances establish clearly that England possesses as fine a tradition of folk dance and, if folk songs are included, of folk music as any other country. But until recently that tradition has failed to exercise such an influence upon conscious and professed art in this country as has been the source of inspiration and vitality elsewhere. In England, unfortunately, all the art forms associated with music have been diverted from their true and natural courses. In the region of pure music the revival of folk music has already contributed to a renaissance, as may be seen from the work of George Butterworth, Dr. Vaughan Williams, (both leaders of the folk dance movement), and

Mr. Holst. The two latter have composed successful operas, which could not have existed without the folk music revival. Every art has its national type and the folk art of a country supplies the native idiom."

417. "Mr. Sharp realised at once that his discoveries were of more than antiquarian or historical value, and that a judicious revival of the traditional art might yet serve to create those conditions, for lack of which the development of popular culture had acquired unnatural and perverted characteristics. When, therefore, the work of collection and publication was sufficiently advanced, he founded in 1911 the English Folk Dance Society, with a view to bringing the dances back into the everyday life of the people. The Society is an authoritative body, recognised by the educational authorities of the country, and its object is to lay the foundations for the continuance of folk dancing as a living form of art, practised under the guidance of trained teachers in conformity with a high standard, and in accordance with the genuine tradition."

418. "The Society's main activity at present is necessarily the training of a large body of teachers and the establishment of them in all parts of the country through the agency of its forty-two local branches. Through the formation of County branches the dissemination of the dances in rural areas has been largely increased, and great assistance has been given to this side of the Society's work by an annual grant from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. Vacation Schools are held three times a year for practical and theoretical instruction in the dances and songs. During the year 1924, 1,800 courses of a week's duration were taken by students from all parts of the country. In the same year 137 courses of weekly classes, apart from the Vacation Schools, were carried out by the Society in London, with a total attendance of 3,000. In order to maintain a high standard the Society holds examinations, and grants certificates of proficiency; the total number of certificates so far granted is 4,000. Other activities of the Society are



the giving of lectures and demonstrations for propagandist purposes, and the organisation of parties for general country dancing "

419 " The Society is thus propagating knowledge of the English Folk Dance in the belief that with its combination of physical, social, and aesthetic qualities it provides, particularly for a type of person whom many artistic movements fail to touch, a cultural recreation, a means of self-expression, and an escape from the commonplace aspects of life, that is both valuable and welcome. It is an art, the performance of which is satisfying to body and mind, not to each singly, but to both together. The movements of the dance are so free and natural, and blend so harmoniously with the music, both having developed together, that in a good performance there is a perfect balance of muscular and aesthetic activity. The dances are entirely free from affectation and posture, and contain no loophole for sensuality. Above all, being the product of conditions which have protected them from extraneous corruption, and having been evolved by the reaction of nature upon the English temperament in its purest form, they are essentially national."

420. " But besides this immediate object, which has been and still is the main function of the revival, the Society looks forward to a goal of artistic development, which is none the less real for being at present undefined and even conjectural. The present stage of the movement is undeniably marked by a certain artificiality. A folk art, in its natural state a matter of oral tradition and continuous growth, restrained by the conservativeness of custom and always preserving its form, but still reflecting the development of the community's tastes and impulses generation by generation, has now been confined within the covers of text books. So far at any rate as the sword and morris dances are concerned, this is the first restraint which has been deliberately put upon their growth. It is restraint necessary in view of the obsolescence in which

most of the dances were found, and of the decay of the spirit which vitalised them."

421. "Guided by Mr. Sharp, the Society has necessarily insisted on a rigid conformity to the practice of the dances as last observed and recorded, so that the tradition may become thoroughly re-established and the spirit of the dances re-created before any new departure takes place. But no art can stand still, and this apparently static condition is no more than a phase of convalescence, on the completion of which the national art of dancing will be able to resume its course. What form this resumption will take can at present be only a matter of conjecture. There may be an evolution of the 'traditions' from the points at which they stopped; or a development of new 'traditions' applied to dances of the old type and character, or a creation of new forms of dance conceived in the same spirit as the old dances, but having only a general resemblance to them; or again there may be an advance in the direction of an English Ballet, so that the process will end where it began in a union of Dance and Drama. If the last of these possibilities is realised, a striking significance will attach to a remark once made by Mr. Granville-Barker, who said, 'I think that on the foundation of music and dancing a really national drama will be best realised'."

422. "It is the part of the English Folk Dance Society rather to provide the basis for such developments than to originate or direct them. The creative impulse must come from individuals free to pursue their own bent. It is thought that the comparatively unfruitful history of dancing in the region of conscious art has been due to the lack of solid and recognisable foundations, owing to the peculiar difficulties of record and preservation. There has been no refuge after false starts, and no fountain at which inspiration can be renewed. It may thus be claimed that the revival of folk dancing in England is giving the art of dancing a chance which it has hardly enjoyed before."

423 "If any of the above-mentioned possibilities come about, and there are doubtless others, their emergence will be a stimulating experience for all connected with it, their development will call for high aesthetic qualities, which are likely to be found in all classes, and their progress will be a source of great artistic interest, educational value and inspiration."

424 Before we pass from this subject we desire to place on record our high appreciation of the great work undertaken with such success by the late Mr Cecil Sharp. We recommend to all dramatic societies the study of folk dances, not only for the purpose of their presentation, where necessary, in the course of a play, but because of their value in teaching graceful movement on the stage. We find again in the drama a great instrument of education in so far as it contributes to the observance of the laws of rhythmic movement, and to the development of physical grace.

### *Craftsmanship.*

425 We turn now to another element in dramatic production which we described as contributing at once to its attraction and to its high educational value, the evocation of the element of craftsmanship. This point was well made in the Citizen House evidence. "Creative hunger is the basis of all the difficulties of to-day. It is a difficult thing to satisfy. People want to do and to make things."

426. We were glad to find that the great majority of societies from which we obtained evidence made a special point of designing and making their own scenery, properties and costumes. Under such circumstances, the members derive the great educational benefits inherent in the study of composition, colour, pattern and craftsmanship, and we consider that all societies would be well advised to undertake this work.

## XII. A CO-OPERATIVE ENTERPRISE.

427. This aspect of play production has great importance from another point of view. When a society undertakes the whole production of a play, and enlists the services, not of actors alone, but of musicians, dancers, craftsmen and dressmakers, the production becomes a co-operative enterprise. In an earlier paragraph we quoted some evidence describing an attempt to establish friendlier relations in an office through the formation of a dramatic society, and pointing out how the success of the venture had been due in great measure to the fact that everyone was impressed with the fact that they could contribute something. Our witness also held strongly that there should be no distinction of persons, that everyone should be made to feel that their contribution, whether it was that of acting Hamlet or the Second Grave-digger, conducting the orchestra or playing the tambourine, designing the scenery or driving nails into an invisible section of it, was held in equal regard. With a view to emphasising the point, his society gave on their programmes the names of everyone taking part, including the programme sellers and scene shifters. In such circumstances, he held, a sense of comradeship was engendered which was of the utmost value to the individual and to the community. In this view we entirely concur.

428. We note that two societies with the highest reputation attach so much importance to this point that they require their members to observe a complete anonymity. No names are printed on the programmes either of the Stoneland Players or of the Maddermarket Theatre, except that of the Director, which is a legal requirement.

429. Another practice of the Maddermarket Theatre, which tends towards the same end, is the constant change in the allotment of parts. Mr. Nugent Monek has no leading man or woman. In one play a man plays the hero, in another he finds himself part of the crowd. This seems to us an admirable practice. Hundreds of dramatic societies

have come to an untimely end through gaining the reputation of being a clique, in which no new-comer can hope to rise above a minor part.

430. Mr. Nugent Monck also makes a great point of discipline and confesses frankly to "bullying any actor who is guilty of disloyalty to his fellow actors through gross carelessness or unpunctuality." Dramatic production in his hands clearly takes on yet a further value in the development of the individual by its emphasis on a spirit of loyalty to the group. The self-discipline, which is universally admitted to be essential for moral or intellectual development, is brought about most happily and most easily by *esprit de corps*.

431. Moreover when dramatic production is made a co-operative enterprise, the gateway which it offers to other subjects becomes much wider. Acting alone offers a gateway to many intellectual interests, the study for instance of Literature and History. We were glad to note that many societies held, or encouraged their members to attend classes in Literature. We noted also with pleasure the record of visits paid to the British Museum brought about by the production of Greek plays. But when a society undertakes all the details of production, its members are drawn into classes not only in these subjects but in all the other arts ancillary to the drama, find new interests and discover talents of which they were possibly quite unaware.

432. Societies which have a permanent headquarters such as the London County Council Evening Institutes, Settlements and other Community Centres have a particular advantage in this respect. In the months prior to a dramatic production the Centre is a hive of activity. The actors are busy at rehearsals and lectures, the engineers at the installing of special lighting arrangements, the musicians in the music room, the craftsmen in their workshops, the dressmakers in their work room, the scene painters in their studios. The play becomes the pivot of many activities, each with its own special appeal, and capable of ministering to the developing life of the individual.

## XIII. DIFFICULTIES OF AMATEUR SOCIETIES.

433. A number of difficulties which amateur societies have to face have been brought to our notice. The first is the question of fees for play production and play readings. A fixed fee renders the performance of certain plays by village societies and the smaller urban societies an impossible venture, and the British Drama League is attempting to secure a system of payment on a royalty basis. The League is also concerned with the question of the legal definition of "a public performance" which affects play readings as well as play production. In the circumstances we prefer to express no opinion on these matters.

434. It has further been suggested to us that the financial risks of play production by amateur societies would be greatly lessened if more attention was paid to securing publicity through the press, and by the design and circulation of attractive posters. The business side of the production is often left in the hands of an already harassed producer, when it might be delegated more suitably to any one of the many members of a society with business experience.

435. Some of our witnesses, in particular Mrs. Godwin King and Miss de Reyes of Citizen House, considered that it was most important to make no charge for admission, but to have a silver collection. They considered that under such circumstances there was a better atmosphere, and that enough money was always raised to make the venture self-supporting. The Leeds Civic Theatre has adopted this course.

436. Other witnesses expressed themselves as most strongly opposed to the practice of giving performances in the aid of a charity. They apparently held the view that under such circumstances the players were assured that their deficiencies would be overlooked owing to the excellence of their intentions. The players gave, and the

audience expected, a second rate performance, with grave results to the reputation and educational value of the dramatic art. We agree that such a danger exists. But we doubt if there are many societies whose desire to raise money has taken precedence over their desire to give the best possible production. There is no reason why a production should not be at once of high quality and a means of raising money for charitable purposes.

437. Some societies have mentioned a difficulty in obtaining books. This difficulty need not arise. Many Public Libraries such as those of Birmingham, Bury, Cardiff and Wolverhampton, have extensive collections, while definite co-operation between the local library and the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich, and the Little Theatre, Bristol, has been mentioned in evidence. County Libraries, such as those of Kent and Middlesex, also have considerable dramatic sections. The Librarians of Public Libraries are generally most glad to co-operate with local literary, dramatic and other societies, and to meet their requests for books so far as the financial resources of the Library permit. Moreover recourse to the excellent library of the British Drama League is possible, either for sets of plays required for productions and readings, or for books on dramatic criticism, the history of the stage, the art of acting, costume design, and the other arts ancillary to play production.

## XIV. TEACHERS AND PRODUCERS.

*The training of producers.*

438. The greatest problem however of the amateur society is generally the producer. In our questionnaire to dramatic societies we asked "Does the society produce its own plays or does it employ a professional producer? What are the society's views on this point?" The answers to this question were amazing in their variety, and no uniformity exists even in societies of precisely the same character. For instance a professional producer is always employed by the Oxford University Dramatic Society and never by the Cambridge Amateur Dramatic Club. Many societies were emphatically opposed to the professional producer. One society went so far as to say:—"Plays are produced because of the importance of speech training, language study and deportment, because of the refining influence of our best dramatic literature, and because of the humanising influence of a direct study of the great characters which move and speak in the settings of the master dramatists. We are not concerned with the training of individuals for the stage, nor do we wish to rival professional performances."

439. Other replies were of the same tenour, and appeared to indicate among other things a surprising ignorance of the professional stage. They appeared to suggest that a professional producer could not be expected to be interested in the drama as an art, was incapable of sincerity, and was preoccupied with the exhibition of a series of tricks and mannerisms.

440. Undoubtedly there are professional actors who come under this condemnation. On the other hand there are many actors who have a profound acquaintance with the drama as an art in all its aspects, and have the necessary sympathy, patience and tact to communicate their knowledge to amateurs. An amateur society, if it desired to employ a professional producer, would naturally choose one of the latter type.



but I have disciplined them. I have been the master of my troop. And thanks to the confidence that has existed between us, thanks to the feeling of equality before difficulties which we have in common to overcome, thanks to the irresistible fascination of work ceaselessly undertaken together and ceaselessly perfected, and to that spirit of justice which has given to each in turn the opportunity to show what he can do, thanks to all this, the work has been easy, full of joy, and almost always crowned with success. Nothing is more debasing than the task of a player when it is undertaken without love and without dignity. Nothing more moving than that sacrifice of himself which the actor offers every day to the thought of the poet who is the true priest of the theatre."

451 " There is another condition of theatre work of the finest quality which is often mentioned and everywhere recognised as indispensable, a condition, however, which is seldom found. This is the unity of conception which should not only inform the production from the very beginning of its preparation, but which should also be evident in the execution of its every detail. The most common defect in our stage work, and the defect that is most often noticed, is poor organisation and a lack of co-ordination. To achieve that harmony of effect that shall really impress at once the minds and senses of the spectators, there must be one man who, having first penetrated the secret, and, so to say, incorporated in himself the rhythm of the drama, having also assimilated the character of each personage in the play, and the actions and reactions between the various actors, should be capable of circumscribing the outline of the drama, setting bounds to its extent, forming its contents, planning the decoration of the stage, lighting it, arranging its furniture, imagining the physical appearance and costume of the actors, regulating the physical evolutions of the scene, assigning to everything its place, to each individual his particular action, in rediscovering in fine in a world of make-believe the natural movement and infinite variety of life. The producer is here the substitute of the dramatic poet,

441. The question appears to us to be largely one of finance. Village societies and small urban societies will never be in a position to engage a producer. The larger urban societies, attempting to provide a play once a month, will be very fortunate if they find anyone among their members having at once sufficient experience and sufficient leisure to be able to undertake all the duties of production, and will be forced to employ a professional producer. We have already come to this conclusion in an earlier paragraph, on consideration of Mr. Gregson's experiences in Yorkshire.

442. But clearly, whether societies are or are not in a financial position to employ a professional producer, they cannot but derive the greatest benefit from skilled direction. No one suggests that the study of literature, of music, or of painting, is best undertaken without guidance and on an empirical basis. Yet this suggestion is seriously made as regards dramatic production, which comprehends these and many other arts. Under such conditions a play may cause infinite pleasure to the performers and considerable diversion to their friends and relations in the audience, but it cannot be regarded either as a form of art or as an instrument of education.

443. The problem which then arises is how can this skilled direction be obtained by societies which have not the funds to pay anyone on a professional basis. In many cases a society has been formed by someone with professional experience, and no difficulty has arisen. In other cases the problem has been solved to some extent by the Schools of Dramatic Art in London, and by Summer Schools.

444. The Schools in London have already rendered great service to the amateur dramatic movement in training amateur producers. Sometimes these are persons who have attended the Schools with the object of obtaining qualifications as teachers in certain subjects. They have afterwards used the knowledge gained in teaching in schools during the day and in the service of amateur societies in the evening. Others have attended with the definite object of advancing

the cause of the drama in the neighbourhood of their homes, and have taken a leading part in production on their return. Producers of this character have been most successful in promoting at once a high artistic standard and happy relations between the members of a society. We have already spoken of the great service rendered by the University of London in the institution of a Diploma in Dramatic Art. The course of training prescribed has been fully set out in paragraph 250. It contains a study of all the elements in the dramatic art which we have examined in our consideration of the drama as an educational instrument. It is clear that a student attending one of the institutions recognised for the purposes of the Diploma, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, and the Polytechnic School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, and taking the Diploma at the end of the course, would be admirably fitted to give guidance to an amateur dramatic society.

445. We have already mentioned the work of the Dramatic Art Centre at the Mary Ward Settlement in providing training for teachers engaged in the schools. The Polytechnic School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art also provides for the needs of many part-time students. In the first two terms of the session 1924-25 there were, for instance, 349 evening students.

446. The supply of teachers and producers is also augmented from other sources. Many who cannot attend a full-time course, and do not live sufficiently near to the London Schools to make part-time attendance possible, have derived great benefit from the Summer Schools which are conducted by the Central School at Stratford-on-Avon and elsewhere, by the Dramatic Art Centre, and by other bodies such as the National Adult School Union.

447. While we attach the greatest importance to skilled direction, we consider that if a society numbers among its members someone who has a marked talent for production, it is well advised to sacrifice the greater finish, which may be

for let us never forget that it is the poet and the poet alone whose influence was originally supreme in all the life of the drama. It was the poet who trained the chorus, determined its movements, decided the arrangement of the stage, and even created the physical appearance of the actors. In the fifth century before Christ Aeschylus summed up in himself the whole of the drama. From him everything outflowed as from a fountain head. To him the rhythm of the whole was subservient. But from the very moment when the dramatic poet became separated as it were from the conditions of theatrical representation, lost interest in them and grew content to specialise in his function of author, from that moment he ceased to grow, fell into decay, and a certain decadence set in. So fugitive is the moment of perfection!"

## XV. SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATIONS.

452. We have been concerned almost exclusively with the work of amateur dramatic societies. We have, however, already made reference to the work of the British Empire Shakespeare Society, and to the New Shakespeare Company, and other companies engaged in presenting the plays of our greatest dramatist. Mention must also be made of the London Shakespeare League which now has a history of twenty three years. The League has had many activities, at present its chief work appears to be directed towards securing that the plays should be presented without cuts, and so far as possible under the conditions as regards stage and scenery, which obtained when the plays were written. Mr. William Poel, who was so good as to give us an account of the League's work, writes:—"The building of an Elizabethan Playhouse has become a necessity. The greatest honour we can do Shakespeare is to show the world what are the limitations under which Shakespeare himself was content to work, and that these so-called 'limitations' had exceptional advantages both for the author and for his actors in his own day."

453. Mr. Nugent Monck also holds a high opinion of the Elizabethan Theatre. The Maddermarket Theatre is an exact model; it has an apron stage, protruding into the auditorium. In his evidence he expressed the view that this shape of stage was the best for the playing of Shakespeare, and that he found no difficulty in producing plays on it. He added that the scenery was permanent. "There was really no necessity for changing scenery. It was quite true that the senses, as well as the brain, should be stimulated by a dramatic production, and that the eye yearned for some colour. This effect, however, could be obtained by costume and grouping. He aimed at getting beautiful pictures, but not a framed picture. At any great moment in a play, the grouping was quite as important as the dialogue."

454. Sir Israel Gollancz also gave us some account of the many Shakespeare Associations with which he is connected. He said that "he was Chairman of the Shakespeare Association and of the Shakespeare Day Committee, as well as Honorary Secretary of the Shakespeare Memorial Committee, whose aim was to bring about the foundation of a National Theatre in London as the most fitting memorial to Shakespeare in the Metropolis of the Empire."

455. "Drama was the most potent force in the life and education of the people. In Shakespeare they had a thinker and a philosopher who, by happy chance, chose this medium as best suited for his genius. Shakespeare had a particular attraction for the common folk from the time when his plays were first presented down to the present day. The population of Elizabethan times was much rougher than the population of to-day, yet his plays had been a success with the groundlings of 300 years ago. The drama of Shakespeare emerged from the life and needs of the people, re-acted thereon, and made it the nobler."

456. "Under the influence of the Shakespeare Day Committee, an attempt was being made to focus the interest in and study of Shakespeare's plays on a special day, known as 'Shakespeare Day,' April 23rd. The Shakespeare Day Committee desired to bring about the recognition of this day throughout the English speaking world. They hoped that performances would be given both by professional players, and by amateurs, and, in particular, that the day should prove the culminating point of the year's work in the study of Shakespeare in the schools. The Committee had already won considerable success. In 1917, 10,000 schools in the State of New York had joined in a commemoration with British Schools. Some Public Schools, such as the City of London School, set apart a special day for enacting of scenes from Shakespeare and for recitations from English poets as well as for the distribution of prizes awarded for Shakespeare study."

457. "But the culmination of all this education effort and embodiment of all these aspirations was the foundation of Municipal Theatres, especially of the Shakespeare National Theatre. This last movement was first set on foot at a meeting in the Mansion House on the 28th February, 1905, when a representative Committee was appointed to consider the foundation of a Shakespeare Memorial in London of a permanent and monumental character. The purpose of the Committee was to build, equip and endow a National Theatre in London, as the best memorial to Shakespeare. The Committee was prepared to build the Theatre, if the Government would provide an adequate site."

458. "The objects of a Shakespeare National Theatre, as conceived by the Committee were these —

- (i) to keep the plays of Shakespeare in its repertory ;
- (ii) to revive whatever else is vital in English classical drama ;

- (iii) to prevent recent plays of great merit from falling into the oblivion to which the present theatrical system is apt to consign them ;

- (iv) to produce new plays and to further the development of the modern drama ;

- (v) to produce translations of representative works of foreign drama, ancient and modern ;

- (vi) to stimulate the art of acting through the varied opportunities which it would offer to the members of the company."

459 "He felt sure that the educational work in drama and good taste which was being done in schools would make a National Theatre absolutely necessary in the near future. In France it was recognised that the theatre must be linked up with education, and the Odéon Theatre had an intimate connection with French Universities and Public Schools. He thought that possibly the Municipal Theatre might help or be helped forward by the foundation of a National Theatre."

## XVI. A NATIONAL THEATRE.

460. While we wish to commend in every way the work of the Shakespeare Associations in furthering the study and production of Shakespeare's plays, we feel unable to offer any detailed comment on the proposals for a Shakespeare National Theatre. We considered from the first that this subject involved so many difficult issues, and might lead to so much controversy that we could not attempt to consider it within the limits of this Report. We should not, however, be giving a fair presentation of the views of some of our witnesses if we did not mention that some of them in the course of their evidence referred to the establishment of a National Theatre as an essential condition of the advancement of the drama, both as a form of art and as an instrument of education, in providing an inspiration for such dramatic enterprises as we have mentioned in this Report. Mr. Granville-Barker and Mr. Whitworth, the representatives of the British Drama League, for instance, laid great emphasis on the point. In a pamphlet issued by the League the concept of a Shakespeare Memorial is placed side by side with the need for a theatre which should build up a repertory of modern masterpieces. The author of the pamphlet summarises his views in the following passages :—

461. "The acted drama is a potent influence, whether for good or ill, in the life of the nation. Its influence is not, at present, either so healthful or so rationally recreative as it might easily become."

462. "The British people, and its kinsfolk, possess a body of dramatic literature at least as great as any yet produced in the world. The voice of its supreme dramatist, Shakespeare, remains, after three hundred years, as living and as moving as it was to his contemporaries. Yet there are many times when, in the city where his great works were conceived and brought forth, his voice cannot be heard at all, or only under very great disadvantages."



463. "The lack of a permanent home of Shakespearean acting where a fine tradition can be built up and maintained, seriously detracts from the glory of London, and from her metropolitan pre-eminence among the cities of the Empire."

464. "Such a home can be provided only by a National Theatre. That term implies a theatre (a) not run for individual profit; (b) conducted on the repertory, as distinct from the long run, system; (c) devoting the best of its energies to the service of Shakespeare; (d) keeping alive whatever is really vital in the drama of the past; (e) setting a standard for the drama and acting of the future"

465. "Though, in the giant cities of to-day, the long run is inevitable, yet its exclusive predominance is a serious impediment to the healthy development of dramatic art. The only escape from this evil lies in the repertory system, in other words, the constant alternation of performances, which prevails at all the great theatres of the Continent from the Théâtre-Français downwards. The National Theatre would give a much-needed impetus to the establishment of similar theatres throughout the country."

466. "H.M. King George V, in opening the new County Hall, said: 'The men of old times were wise in erecting fine buildings in their towns. It is necessary to appeal to the imagination: a public authority meanly housed may be meanly esteemed.' What is true of a public authority is no less true of a great art"

467. "For these reasons, and for many others, the movement for the establishment of a National Theatre deserves the sympathy and support of all good citizens."

468. The proposals for a National Theatre appear to contemplate some measure of support from the Exchequer. So far as this point is concerned, it was pointed out that virtually every nation in Europe, other than our own, has a National Theatre, and that many have municipal theatres. Another memorandum includes this passage:—"If the objection to a National Theatre endowed or assisted out

## XVII. CONCLUSION.

472. We have said in an earlier paragraph that the finest acting is the prerogative of the professional artist, the finest production the prerogative of the professional stage. In the National Theatre, Exemplary Theatre, Ideal Theatre, by whatever name the institution is called which is to bring drama to its consummation as a form of art, what place has the amateur, and of what significance is the amateur movement, which we have been at pains to describe? We are inclined to think that it has the highest significance. For in Mr. Granville-Barker's words the perfect theatre could never exist without the perfect audience. And the amateur movement, in giving an ever-increasing number of men and women an acquaintance with the art of the theatre, and a capacity for the keenest critical appreciation, is providing that audience. And if we have the perfect audience, may we not hope for the perfect play? Miss Fogerty has spoken of the widely diffused popular interest which must necessarily precede a period of great activity in any art. The last manifestation of this popular interest gave us Shakespeare. May not the next manifestation give us another?

473. We have spoken of the service which the amateur movement can render to drama as a form of art. What of its service to Education? Our claims on its behalf are high. We have said that it is unique at once in its power of attraction, and in its power, under right conditions, to promote moral and intellectual development. We have said that the study of great plays and particularly the attempt to represent the characters created by a master mind, directs the thoughts of men towards beauty, order and harmony, and confers the quality of imaginative sympathy, which is the supreme gift of a liberal education. We have spoken of the delight in speech and in graceful movement, which comes through the study of acting, and of the expression of the creative instinct, and pleasure in

colour, pattern and craftsmanship, which come through the designing and making of scenery, properties and costumes. We have attached high importance to the sense of comradeship and *esprit-de-corps* brought about by participation in a common enterprise. If drama is the greatest of all arts, because it comprehends all other arts, is it not, under right conditions, the greatest of all instruments of education, because it comprehends them all?

474. Turning to the future, we ask what may be the outcome of this dramatic movement which we have surveyed? Surely it will grow; and giving to an ever-growing number the gift of imaginative sympathy, the sense of comradeship, will bring some element of healing and of reconciliation into the warring elements in our national life.

## PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. RELATION OF THE DRAMA TO ADULT EDUCATION.

1. There is a growing interest in the drama on the part of educational bodies, and a widespread growth of amateur dramatic societies engaged in the production of plays of high quality. These societies representing a new dramatic movement form the principal subject of our investigations. (Paragraphs 1-5 )

### II. NATURE OF THE DRAMATIC ART.

2. (a) Drama is a composite art, requiring for its full expression and perfection an understanding of and proficiency in all other arts.

(b) Drama is at once a most vivid and most subtle artistic medium, and is therefore a powerful instrument for the conveyance of ideas.

(c) In consequence drama under right conditions can be a most potent instrument of moral, artistic and intellectual progress, and under wrong conditions an equally potent instrument of moral, artistic and intellectual degradation. (Paragraph 18.)

3. The conditions under which drama is presented are therefore a matter of the greatest interest to all concerned in Education. (Paragraph 19.)

### III. HISTORY OF THE DRAMATIC ART.

4. The history of drama in England suggests :—

- (a) that the English people do not lack dramatic power, appreciation and histrionic ability ;
- (b) that when social conditions have been favourable *drama has been genuinely popular ;*
- (c) that at the present time, when there are clear signs that favourable conditions are recurring, the fact has already become evident in a dramatic revival national in its scope. (Paragraph 49 )

### IV. THE PROFESSIONAL THEATRE.

5 The dramatic art is practised by many types of organisation, the professional theatre organised on a commercial basis, the theatre employing professional artists but not organised for profit, amateur societies under professional direction, and amateur societies working on their own account. Of these various types the professional theatre organised on a commercial basis is a subject with which we are unable to deal. We have neither the qualification nor the desire to investigate the circumstances of the theatre as a profession or as a commercial venture. We desire to say however that we are well aware that the standard of acting and of production is in general higher in the commercial theatre than in any other type, and that many managers are actuated in their choice of play by artistic rather than purely *commercial motives*. But we do not think that our inability to survey or to criticise the professional theatre seriously affects the value of our conclusions on the drama as an instrument of education. We recognise that the greatest acting is the prerogative of the professional artist, the greatest production of a play the prerogative of the professional stage, and that drama reaches its highest realisation as a form of art in the professional theatre. But, apart from this consideration, we

consider that all the educational benefits which are inherent in seeing the drama are equally inherent in participation in the drama, and participation confers many benefits which are not conferred by the witnessing of a play. We conceive therefore that drama reaches its highest realisation as an instrument of education in the hands of the amateur. (Paragraphs 52-55.)

6. We have felt bound however to make a brief reference to the professional theatre not organised for profit owing to the great intrinsic interest of some of the enterprises from a social standpoint, and to the light which they throw on the means best adapted to bring good drama before the people. We have therefore given a brief account of "The Old Vic," the Lena Ashwell Players, the Arts League of Service and certain "repertory" theatres. Our principal reason for considering the last type is that suggestions have been made that the professional "repertory" theatre provides a complete solution of the problem of bringing the people in touch with good drama, and that so far as this object is concerned there is no need to depend upon the production of plays by amateurs. (Paragraphs 56-58.)

7. With regard to this point we note that with one exception (and that a University town) professional "repertory" theatres are located in very large centres of population. Notwithstanding this consideration, the venture of conducting a "repertory" theatre is precarious in the extreme. (Paragraphs 94-95.)

8. While therefore the professional "repertory" theatre may solve the problem of bringing good drama before the people in great cities, it is not at present, and will not be in the near future, the means by which the great mass of people living in smaller centres of population may be brought into touch with good drama. (Paragraph 96.)

9. Amateur societies therefore deserve every encouragement from the point of view of giving the people an acquaintance with the literature of the drama, apart from

15. In considering amateur societies from the educational or social standpoint, we are unable to agree either that their object should be to train professional actors, or that their success can be gauged by the number of their members who pass on to the professional stage. (Paragraph 113.)

16. We suggest that competitions similar to that held under the auspices of the British Drama League in London might well be inaugurated in other large centres of population with a view to the encouragement of a high standard in choice of play and production, and we welcome the inauguration of a National Festival of Community Drama under the auspices of the League. (Paragraph 117.)

17. As regards urban areas other than the great cities, the problem of bringing good drama before the people can be effectively attacked by amateur companies with a professional producer and a "Little Theatre," such as exists in Norwich (Paragraphs 156-157.)

18. Such a company can produce only one play a month, but visits by similar companies from other towns and by professional companies giving plays of merit can be arranged. (Paragraph 160)

19. Moreover considerable suburban areas around great cities may hope to see good plays through performances by the "Little Theatre" Company in local halls. (Paragraph 161.)

20. The establishment of "Little Theatres" appears to us to be quite essential for the advancement of the drama. It is doubtless a matter of great regret that many of the best plays do not fill big theatres. But it is unreasonable to blame commercial managers for refusing to put on such plays with every prospect of loss. It is better to realise that the public for best plays is still limited, and that "Little Theatres" are urgently required in order to provide for the needs of this public. If the dramatic revival continues at its present pace the public for the best plays may in time become sufficiently numerous to fill big theatres. In the

meantime nothing can contribute more to the growth of interest in good drama than the provision of "Little Theatres." (Paragraph 158.)

21. The establishment of a loan fund for the provision of "Little Theatres" is suggested. (Paragraph 162.)

## VII. THE DRAMA IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

22. While we think that the study of good plays can best be undertaken by actual participation in dramatic production, we recognise that the play-reading groups, which are often to be found in settlements and other institutions, can cover a wide field of drama during the year, and that they form a body of educated opinion which is of great assistance in commanding a high standard in choice of play by the institutions to which they belong. (Paragraph 208.)

23. The evidence of the Workers' Educational Association and of the University Extension Movement suggests that courses in the literature of the drama are of the greatest service in bringing students into touch with the high intellectual content of great masterpieces of dramatic art, and in providing a background of history and theory for persons taking part in the production of a play, which greatly adds to the educational benefits derived from other elements of play production. In the union of serious study under class conditions and the subsequent production of the plays studied we find drama at its highest as an instrument of education. We strongly recommend to Adult Educational Associations and to Local Education Authorities the promotion of classes in the literature of the drama. (Paragraph 226.)

24. We consider that Local Education Authorities can play a great part in furthering education through the drama. We suggest that :—

- (i) the reading and acting of plays should be encouraged in schools of all types, including evening institutes ;



- (ii) as regards adolescents and adults dramatic studies can be most happily associated with other humane studies in special Literary Institutes. The example of the London County Council in promoting such Institutes might with advantage be followed by other Local Education Authorities. It is also suggested that Authorities might contribute to institutions having a similar purpose conducted by voluntary organisations ;
- (iii) visits to the Theatre for the purpose of seeing classic and other plays connected with the course of study undertaken should be in every way encouraged We are glad to know that the Board of Education has made regulations which enable such visits to be made, and the attendance to be recorded under certain conditions, not only in connection with elementary schools but also in connection with classes for adults ;
- (iv) where the local theatre does not provide performances of classic and other plays connected with the course of study, the services of amateur societies might be utilised. The production by amateur societies of plays which are being studied in local schools is much to be commended. It would be not unreasonable that the Local Education Authority in such circumstances should make some contribution for services rendered. An Authority might also render great service to amateur societies by the loan of rooms for rehearsal and other purposes connected with the production of good plays ;
- (v) it is worth consideration whether in the case of new schools the hall might not be designed so as to enable plays to be produced in it. We understand that there is no difficulty in designing a hall which can be used for all the usual school purposes and for play productions as well.

- (vi) in order that the dramatic studies in schools and evening institutes may be carried on to the best advantage, it is desirable that courses for teachers should be instituted at a special centre. The extent of the Local Education Authority's responsibilities would dictate the nature of the centre. One Authority might find it desirable to have on its staff a Director of dramatic studies to give courses in the various subjects ancillary to play production, and to supervise the dramatic work in the schools and evening institutes generally. Another Authority, representing a small area, would no doubt be content with providing occasional courses for teachers, or with enabling teachers to attend courses at other schools, and in particular Summer Schools ;
- (vii) a Local Education Authority might reasonably give scholarships to enable teachers to attend full-time at Schools of Dramatic Art, such as those in London recognised for the purposes of the University of London Diploma. Scholarships might also be awarded at those schools to persons other than teachers, or intending teachers, on the lines of those offered by the London County Council which are tenable at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. (Paragraph 247.)

25. We recommend the establishment of lectureships in the Art of the Theatre at Universities, believing that the Art of the Theatre in itself is a study worthy to take its place among the other humane studies of a University, and further that a knowledge of the Art of the Theatre is essential for the full appreciation of the work of the great dramatists, which forms an important part of the study of Literature. In this connection we note with pleasure the recent inauguration of a School of Dramatic Study and Research at East London College. (Paragraph 249.)

26. We consider that the recent institution by the University of London of a Diploma in Dramatic Art is likely to be of great service to the new dramatic movement. (Paragraph 251.)

### VIII. OTHER AMATEUR SOCIETIES.

27. The evidence submitted by Settlements and Boys' Clubs, suggests that the drama has an instant appeal to persons whom no other intellectual interest has touched. (Paragraphs 173 and 264.) This conclusion finds striking confirmation in the evidence submitted in regard to an experiment in prisons (Paragraph 262)

28. The evidence submitted by certain works and offices suggests that the drama is an unrivalled instrument for breaking down social barriers and establishing friendly relations. This result is attained in the fullest measure when the production of a play is made a co-operative venture, employing every sort of talent, and not an exhibition of acting alone. (Paragraph 276.)

### IX. THE DRAMA AND THE CHURCHES.

29. The evidence of the Catholic Play Society and other societies suggests that there is a growing tendency in the Churches to regard the drama as an instrument of teaching of great value. We agree with Dr. Boas that if the drama is to take its full place in English life, it must again find allies in the Church and the Schools, such as it was happy in possessing earlier in our history. (Paragraph 297.)

### X. THE DRAMA IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

30. The Glastonbury Players are fortunate in that many of their productions are under the personal direction of the dramatist or composer. Great art demands unity of conception, but in the special circumstances of the dramatic art this unity can only be achieved on those

rare occasions when author and producer are one. (Paragraph 302.)

39. The limitations of a village production should never be regarded as a drawback, but rather as a condition from which a peculiar beauty can be obtained. The presentation by village societies of plays in London is deprecated. (Paragraph 329.)

32. We are convinced from a mass of evidence that the capacity for appreciation of the best drama is as high in the countryside as in the towns, and probably higher. The vogue of trivial farces in many villages is due solely to the fact that the village has never been given an opportunity of producing anything better. (Paragraph 337.)

33. The evidence of the National Adult School Union and of the National Federation of Women's Institutes suggests that Dramatic Competitions and Festivals have great educational possibilities. (Paragraphs 206 and 347.)

## XI. DRAMA AS AN INSTRUMENT OF EDUCATION.

34. There is no section of the community to which the drama has not an immediate and compelling appeal. (Paragraph 350.)

35. Having regard to our previous conclusion that the conditions under which the drama is presented are a matter of the greatest importance to all who are interested in Education, we note with much satisfaction that a number of dramatic associations are engaged in encouraging a high standard in choice of play and other elements of play production, and that Associations whose primary aims are social and educational have recognised in the drama an instrument of education and are attempting to encourage the same high standard. (Paragraph 352.)

36. We consider that the character of play presented by the better type of amateur dramatic society is very high. We note the constant appearance in their programmes of

- (a) Greek plays (Paragraphs 354-356) ;
- (b) the plays of Shakespeare (Paragraphs 357-358) ;
- (c) and of Sheridan (Paragraph 359) ;
- (d) the revival of old plays and the presentation of new plays, and new experiments in dramatic forms, scenery and stagecraft (Paragraphs 361-362.) ;
- (e) the " play of ideas " (Paragraph 363) ;
- (f) the imaginative plays and contemporary poetical drama of English and Irish dramatists (Paragraph 364) ;
- (g) plays designed to revive interest in local tradition, customs and dialect (Paragraph 365) ;
- (h) religious plays (Paragraph 368) ;
- (i) plays designed to give a knowledge of the ideals and aspirations of other countries (Paragraph 369) ;
- (j) plays likely to create interest in our national history, local history and the development of social conditions (Paragraph 370.)

37. These types of play represent a considerable part of the programmes of nearly all the societies which we have described as representing the new dramatic movement. We regard the fact of their presentation as entitling these societies to the claim that their work is of high educational value. (Paragraph 372.)

38. On the other hand we strongly deprecate the presentation of comedies and farces which have been produced in the West End. They require high technical accomplishment in acting, which is rarely possessed by an amateur. Their educational content is often negligible. The only condition under which they have rendered any service to Education is when they have been presented by

societies drawn from many social grades and have led to the establishment of friendly relations between them. (Paragraph 373.)

39. We feel some doubt as to the value of the dramatised scene from a famous novel, which appears to enjoy a wide popularity. (Paragraph 374.)

40. Another type of play in regard to which we feel some doubt is the propaganda play. We consider that dramatic societies are ill advised to put on any play in which propaganda is the primary, and dramatic interest the secondary, consideration. (Paragraph 375.)

41. We attach great importance to the art of acting since we consider that the study of good plays can best be undertaken by actual participation in them. The greatest insight into the mind of the dramatist is obtained in the attempt to represent the characters created by him. (Paragraph 377.)

42. The art of acting, in so far as it entails a sympathetic identification with the character represented, has elements of danger. This fact emphasises the importance of choosing a play which has in it elements of beauty, order and harmony. The effect of participation in such a play is profound, and may enrich the whole life. (Paragraph 380.)

43. The attraction of the drama is due in great measure to the provision of an element of emotional release; its great value in the intellectual and moral development of the individual is due in great measure to its gift of evoking imaginative sympathy. (Paragraph 397.)

44. A further attraction and element of great educational value in the drama is delight in rhythm in its various forms, such as delight in speech, the development of physical grace, and the evocation of the creative instinct in the design of scenery, property and costumes. (Paragraph 400.)

45. We are glad to note that so much research is being conducted in to the nature of speech, and so much effort being made to restore to the English people the pleasure in the colour and music of verse, which they once possessed. (Paragraph 404.)

46. In the countryside some vestige of this delight in beautiful words beautifully spoken still remains. In the towns it has disappeared. The drama can render the greatest service in restoring it. We are glad to find in the evidence submitted to us how much importance is attached by dramatic societies to training in speech, and how often the stimulus to attend classes in elocution has been given by play production. (Paragraph 404 )

47. We recommend to all dramatic societies the study of Folk Dances, not only for their presentation where necessary in the course of a play, but because of their value in teaching graceful movement on the stage. (Paragraph 424.)

48. We consider that all dramatic societies would be well advised to undertake the design and making of their own scenery, property and costumes, in order that their members may derive the great educational benefits inherent in the study of composition, colour, pattern and craftsmanship. (Paragraph 426.)

## XII. A CO-OPERATIVE ENTERPRISE.

49. This aspect of play production has great importance also in making the production of a play not an exhibition of histrionic talent alone, but a co-operative enterprise to which all can contribute in accordance with their talents. In such circumstances a sense of comradeship is engendered which is of the utmost value to the individual and to the community. (Paragraph 427.)

50. Everyone should be made to feel that their contribution; whatever its character, is held in equal regard. We

note that some societies attach so much importance to this point that they require their members to observe complete anonymity. (Paragraphs 427-428.)

51. Another practice which tends towards the same end is the constant change in the allotment of parts, which prevents the danger of the society gaining the reputation of being a clique. (Paragraph 429.)

52. Dramatic production takes on yet a further value in the development by these methods of a spirit of loyalty to the group. Self-discipline, which is universally admitted to be essential to moral and intellectual development, is brought about most happily and easily by *esprit de corps*. (Paragraph 430.)

53. Moreover when dramatic production is made a co-operative enterprise, the gateway which it offers to other subjects becomes much wider. Acting alone offers a gateway to many intellectual interests, the study for instance, of literature and history. But when a society undertakes all the details of production, the members find new interests not only in these subjects, but in other arts ancillary to the drama, and discover talents of which they were unaware. (Paragraph 431.)

54. Societies which have a permanent headquarters, such as the London County Council Evening Institutes, Settlements and other community centres have a particular advantage in this respect. A play becomes a pivot of many activities, each with its own special appeal, and capable of ministering to the developing life of the individual. (Paragraph 432.)

#### XIV. TEACHERS AND PRODUCERS.

55. The greatest problem of the amateur society is generally the producer. (Paragraph 438.)

56. The objections raised to the employment of a professional producer on educational grounds are due in great measure to ignorance of the professional stage.



Many actors have a profound acquaintance with the dramatic art in all its aspects, and have the necessary patience and tact to communicate their knowledge to amateurs. (Paragraphs 440-441.)

57. The employment of a professional producer resolves itself largely into a question of finance. Village societies and small urban societies will probably never be in a position to engage a producer. The larger urban societies attempting to produce a play a month will be very fortunate if they find anyone among their members having sufficient experience and sufficient leisure to undertake the production, and generally will be forced to employ a professional producer. (Paragraph 441.)

58. Whether societies are or are not in a financial position to employ a professional producer, they cannot but derive the greatest benefit from skilled direction. Without skilled direction a play may cause infinite pleasure to the performers, and considerable diversion to their friends and relations in the audience, but it does not exist as a form of art or as an instrument of education. (Paragraph 442.)

59. The problem of skilled direction has been met to some extent by those schools in London, providing full-time courses, which are recognised by the University of London for the purposes of their diploma in Dramatic Art. (Paragraph 444.)

60. By evening courses in these and other schools; (Paragraph 445.)

61. and by Summer Schools. (Paragraph 446.)

62. While we attach the greatest importance to skilled direction, we consider that if a society numbers among its members someone who has a marked talent for production, it is well advised to sacrifice the greater finish, which may be conferred by a professional producer, to the more intimate atmosphere which commonly exists when a

society has relied throughout on the talents of its members alone. (Paragraph 447.)

63. We consider that "dramatic advisers" who could give expert advice on the various elements in the production of a play, though not actually assuming responsibility for the production, would be of great value. (Paragraph 448.)

## XVI. A NATIONAL THEATRE.

64. We considered from the first that the question of a National Theatre and municipal theatres involved so many difficult issues, and might lead to so much controversy, that we could not attempt to consider them within the limits of this Report. We should not, however, be giving a fair presentation of the views of some of our witnesses if we did not mention that some of them referred to the establishment of a National Theatre as an essential condition of the advancement of drama, both as a form of art and as an instrument of education. We suggest that their contentions should be made the subject of enquiry by a Committee better qualified than this Committee to undertake the task. (Paragraphs 450 and 470.)

65. We suggest that a permanent exhibition of theatrical design should be formed in one of the National Museums, and that arrangements should be made for the circulation of exhibits in the provinces similar to those made for exhibits in other arts. (Paragraph 471.)

## LIST OF WITNESSES.

The Committee desire to express their appreciation of the generous assistance which they have received from the witnesses.

1. *Oral and Written Evidence.*

Mr. HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER (British Drama League).

Mr. F. E. DORAN (Manchester Playgoers' Club).

Miss E. M. ELDER  
Miss A. BERRY  
Miss DREW } (Arts League of Service).

Mr. HORACE FLEMING (Beechcroft Settlement, Birkenhead, and the World Association for Adult Education).

Miss E. FOGERTY, L R A.M. (Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art)

Sir ISRAEL GOLLANCZ, Litt.D, F.B.A. (Shakespeare Association).

Mr. J. R. GREGSON (Leeds Civic Theatre).

Sir BARRY V. JACKSON (Birmingham Repertory Theatre).

Miss M. E. KELLY (Village Drama Society).

Mrs. GODWIN KING (Stoneland Players).

Mr. NUGENT MONCK (Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich).

Miss M. S. WEST (London University Extension).

Mrs. WHITMORE (Oxted and Limpsfield Players).

Rev. G. NAPIER WHITTINGHAM (Church of St. Silas-the-Martyr, Kentish Town).

Mr. GEOFFREY WHITWORTH (British Drama League).

2. *Oral Evidence.*

Miss LENA ASHWELL, O.B.E (The Lena Ashwell Players, Ltd.).

Miss LILIAN BAYLIS, M.A. ("The Old Vic").

Miss WASTELL (Stoneland Players).

### 3. *Written Evidence.*

- Mr. W. ARMSTRONG (Liverpool Playhouse Circle).  
Professor G. P. BAKER (University Theatre and Department of Drama, Yale University).  
Mr. H. R. BARBOR (Shoreham Village Players).  
Mr. K. R. BARNES (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art).  
Mr. W. L. MILNER BARRY (Cambridge Amateur Dramatic Club).  
Mr. R. G. BERRY (Cardiff).  
Mr. RUTLAND BOUGHTON (Glastonbury Festival Players, Ltd.).  
Miss P. CARTER (Cotswold Players).  
Mr. R. H. COATS (Birmingham University Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes).  
Mr. V. M. COLLINS (Birmingham Repertory Theatre Playgoers' Society).  
Mr. W. E. COSSENS (Bournville Dramatic Society).  
Miss D. A. CROSSE (Unnamed Society).  
Rev. R. HART DAVIES (Rector, St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden).  
Mr. H. GIBSON, M.C. (The Lena Ashwell Players, Ltd.)  
Mr. N. A. GOLDWATER (Hampstead I.L.P. Dramatic Group).  
Mr. A. GREEN (Longsight C.W.S. Dramatic Society).  
Mr. J. G. HADDEN (Lincoln Municipal Technical School Dramatic Society).  
Mr. H. A. HAMMOND (Sheffield University Dramatic Society).  
Mr. F. E. HANSFORD.  
Mr. P. HARRIS, L.R.A.M. (Oxford and St. George's Club).  
Mr. R. HARVEY (Little Theatre, Bristol).  
Dr. P. HAWORTH, Ph.D. (Department of English, University of Bristol).  
Mr. GYLES ISHAM (Oxford University Dramatic Society).

Mr. N. E. FIELD JONES (Oxford and Bermondsey Shakespeare Society).

Rev. H. KINGSFORD (Catholic Play Society).

Dr. L. LAMPITT (Lyons' Club Amateur Dramatic Society).

Mr. E. R. LINGARD (Stockport Garrick Society).

Mr. JOHN MASEFIELD (Hill Players).

Miss E. M. MARKER (Shoreditch Drama Society).

Miss J. E. MCCRINDELL (David Lewis Club, Liverpool).

Mr. F. S. MILLIGAN, M.C. (Beechcroft Settlement, Birkenhead).

Professor A. E. MORGAN (Sheffield University and Sheffield Repertory Theatre).

Miss F. MULREADY (University College of the South-West of England Dramatic Society).

Mr. P. NASH (Post Office Savings Bank Dramatic Society).

Professor ALLARDYCE NICOLL (East London College and London University Extension)

Mr. R. B. OGDEN (Litmus Players.)

The Rev. L. O'HEA, S.J. (Catholic Social Guild).

Mr. GEORGE PEVERETT (National Adult School Union).

Mr. W. POEL (London Shakespeare League).

Mrs. RAWNSLEY (The Grasmere Players).

Miss C. M. DE REYES (Citizen House, Bath)

Mr. A. REYNOLDS.

Mr. A. O. ROBERTS (Portmadoc Players).

Mr. HOWARD ROSE (British Empire Shakespeare Society).

Miss M. SCOTT (Dramatic Art Centre, Mary Ward Settlement).

Miss CONSTANCE SMEDLEY (Greenleaf Theatre, Ringwood, Hants).

Mr. C. F. SMYLY.

Mr. T. H. TILLEY (Hardy Players).

Miss J. WEBSTER (Liverpool University Dramatic Society).

Major T. WORSWICK (Polytechnic School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art).

Mr. C. A. WRENCH (Federation of London Working Boys' Clubs).

The EDUCATION OFFICER, London County Council (Memorandum by Dr. Boas and evidence from ten Literary Institutes and sixteen other Institutions).

The SECRETARY, Birmingham University Literary and Dramatic Society.

The SECRETARY, English Folk Dance Society.

The SECRETARY, Educational Settlements Association (Memorandum and summary of evidence from fifteen Settlements).

The SECRETARY, Mander Bros. Welfare Club, Wolverhampton.

The SECRETARIES, Abergavenny, Gravesend, Lincoln, Manchester, Shirebrook and Wolsingham Branches of the Workers' Educational Association.

The SECRETARY, Young Men's Christian Association (Memorandum and summary of evidence from forty-six clubs).

The WARDENS, Mary Ward Settlement, London; David Lewis Settlement, Manchester.

The WELFARE SUPERINTENDENT, Rowntree & Co., Ltd.

#### 4. Publications.

The Committee have also made use of certain printed publications, such as those of the British Drama League, Arts League of Service, Village Drama Society and Catholic Play Society, the Reports of the Conferences on New Ideas in Education, the "Times," "Observer," the Theatre Arts Monthly for February 1925, and Mr. Granville Barker's "The Exemplary Theatre."

## INDEX.

## A.

	Pages.
Abbey Theatre, Dublin .. .. .	135, 136
Abercrombie, Lascelles . . . . .	31, 110, 155
Aeschylus . . . . .	91, 190
Agate, James . . . . .	97
Albert Hall, London . . . . .	122
All Hallows Church, East India Dock Road .. .. .	127
Altrincham Garrick Society .. .. .	61
American Universities .. .. .	107, 108, 111
Archer, William .. .. .	46, 97
Aristophanes . . . . .	95
Aristotle .. .. .	96
Armfield, Maxwell . . . . .	131
Arts League of Service . . . . .	3, 24, 26, 31, 42 to 45, 68, 129, 149, 151, 201
Ashwell, Miss Lena . . . . .	36, 42, 46, 97, 101, 170, 202
Atlee, Major C R. . . . .	30
Avery Hill Training College .. .. .	97

## B

Baker, Professor G P .. .. .	107, 111
Bale, John .. .. .	15
Balham Educational Settlement .. .. .	77, 78
Ballad Operas .. .. .	154
Barbor, H R. . . . .	111, 142, 145
Barn Theatre, Oxted .. .. .	67, 68
Barnes, Kenneth .. .. .	9, 97
Barnes, William .. .. .	133
Barnie, Sir James . . . . .	54, 58, 94, 110
Bath Playgoers . . . . .	30
Bax, Clifford .. .. .	71
Baylis, Miss Lilian .. .. .	32, 35, 42, 152, 153, 157, 170, 202
Baynton, Henry . . . . .	153
Beckenham Congregational Church .. .. .	125
Beechcroft Settlement .. .. .	68, 75, 77
Ben Greet Players . . . . .	31
Bennett, Arnold .. .. .	145, 159
Benson, Sir Frank .. .. .	153
Binyon, Laurence .. .. .	33
Birmingham Juvenile Organisations Committee .. .. .	116
Birmingham Playgoers Society .. .. .	28, 30, 108, 152
Birmingham Repertory Theatre . . . . .	4, 27, 28, 129, 157
Birmingham University Literary and Dramatic Society .. .. .	110, 156
Bjornson .. .. .	90, 95

## INDEX—continued.

Pages.

Board of Education	.. .. .	102, 205
Boas, Dr. F. S.	.. .. .	18, 128, 207
Bottomley, Gordon	.. .. .	31, 155
Boughton, Rutland	.. .. .	129, 130, 131, 155
Bourchier, Arthur	.. .. .	.. .. . 109
Bournville Dramatic Society	.. .. .	.. .. . 117
Boys' Clubs	.. .. .	.. 115, 116, 206
Bradford City Council	.. .. .	.. .. . 59
Bradford Industrial Theatre	.. .. .	.. .. . 59, 117
Bristol Little Theatre	.. .. .	4, 29, 30, 184
Bristol Playgoers	.. .. .	.. .. . 30
Bristol Rotary Club	.. .. .	.. .. . 29, 30
British Drama League	.. .. .	3, 4, 46 to 48, 51, 146, 151, 163, 183, 184, 188, 196, 203
British Empire Shakespeare Society	.. .. .	.. .. . 31, 191
British Museum	.. .. .	.. .. . 83, 140, 182
Buckley, Reginald	.. .. .	.. .. . 129
Buckton, Miss	.. .. .	.. .. . 121, 131
Berry, R. G.	.. .. .	.. .. . 134
Butterworth, George	.. .. .	.. .. . 176

## C.

Cadbury Brothers, Ltd.	.. .. .	.. .. . 117
Cadell, Miss Jean	.. .. .	.. .. . 114
Calderon, George	.. .. .	.. .. . 58
Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts	.. .. .	.. .. . 99
Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club	.. .. .	.. .. . 109, 185
Cambridgeshire	.. .. .	.. .. . 142
Cambridgeshire Local Education Authority	.. .. .	.. .. . 101
Capek, Karel	.. .. .	.. .. . 78
Carnegie Trust	.. .. .	.. .. . 34, 35, 43, 46, 47
Catholic Players, Manchester	.. .. .	.. .. . 30
Catholic Play Society	.. .. .	.. .. . 2, 121 to 123, 206
Catholic Stage Guild	.. .. .	.. .. . 124
Casson, Lewis	.. .. .	.. .. . 83
Central School of Speech-Training and Dramatic Art	.. .. .	105, 121, 171, 173, 186, 187
Century Theatre, London	.. .. .	.. .. . 37
Chaucer, Geoffrey	.. .. .	.. .. . 14
Cheshire	.. .. .	.. .. . 60 to 62
Chesterton, G. K.	.. .. .	.. .. . 71
Christchurch, Westminster	.. .. .	.. .. . 127
Church House, Westminster	.. .. .	.. .. . 122
Church, Drama under the auspices of the	.. .. .	.. .. . 12 to 15
Churches, Drama and the	.. .. .	.. .. . 121 to 128, 207
Citizen House, Bath	.. .. .	.. .. . 70 to 74, 156, 157, 180, 183
Clark, Holman	.. .. .	.. .. . 109
Coats, R. H.	.. .. .	.. .. . 89, 90
Colman, George	.. .. .	.. .. . 158
Columbia University	.. .. .	.. .. . 107
Conference on New Ideals in Education	.. .. .	.. 4, 71, 104, 105, 161



## INDEX—continued

Pages.

Congreve, William .. .. .	94
Cons, Miss Emma .. .. .	32
Copeau, Jacques .. .. .	188
Copping, Harold .. .. .	142, 145
Cornell University .. .. .	111
Cornford, F. M. .. .. .	161
Cotswold Players .. .. .	131
Council of Trent .. .. .	125
County Libraries .. .. .	184
Craig, Miss Edith .. .. .	53
Cripplegate Institute, London .. .. .	52
Crosse, Miss D. A. .. .. .	62
Croydon Co-operative Society .. .. .	91
Cumberland, Richard .. .. .	20
Cymmrodorion .. .. .	135

## D.

Dalcroze .. .. .	172
David Lewis Club, Liverpool .. .. .	84, 116
Davies, D. T. .. .. .	136
Dekker, Thomas .. .. .	144
de Reyes, Miss C. M. .. .. .	70, 183
de Walden, Lord Howard .. .. .	46, 71
Doran, F. E. .. .. .	62
Dow, W. B. .. .. .	57, 58, 59
Draffin, Mr. .. .. .	143
Dramatic Art, Nature of the .. .. .	6 to 10
Dramatic Competitions and Festivals .. .. .	51, 52, 86, 87, 149, 150, 207
Drinkwater, John .. .. .	65, 110, 131, 155, 159
Dunsany, Lord .. .. .	75, 78, 142, 155, 159

## E.

East Ham Borough Council .. .. .	84
East London College .. .. .	104, 107, 206
East Sussex, Federation of Women's Institutes .. .. .	150
Educational Settlements .. .. .	2, 75 to 80, 182, 206
Elizabethan period .. .. .	15 to 18
Eisteddfod .. .. .	135
Encyclopaedia Britannica .. .. .	105
English Folk Dance Society .. .. .	173 to 180
Ervine, St. John .. .. .	159
Etherege, Sir George .. .. .	94, 158
Euripides .. .. .	97, 104
Evans, A. H. .. .. .	131
Evans, Beniah .. .. .	134
Exhibition of Community Theatre Art .. .. .	47

## F.

Fagan, J. B. .. .. .	108
Federation of London Working Boys' Clubs .. .. .	115
Fielding, Henry .. .. .	21

## INDEX—continued.

Pages.

Fisher, Herbert .. .. .	33
Fleming, Horace .. .. .	75, 156
Fletcher, Miss .. .. .	134
Fogerty, Miss Elsie .. .. .	17, 121, 171, 197
Folk Dancing .. .. .	173 to 180, 211
Folk drama in England .. .. .	11, 12
Folk House, Bristol .. .. .	77, 78, 152
Forbes-Robertson, Sir Johnston .. .. .	45, 97
France, Anatole .. .. .	75, 84
Francis, J. O. .. .. .	136, 137
Free Churches .. .. .	125 to 126

## G.

Gaiety Theatre, Manchester .. .. .	27 to 31
Galsworthy, John .. .. .	37, 55, 83, 88, 96, 145, 158
Gay, John .. .. .	71
Gayton, Edmund .. .. .	16
Geering, Mr. .. .. .	143
Gibson, Harold .. .. .	35, 170
Glaspell, Susan .. .. .	111
Glastonbury .. .. .	129
Glastonbury Festival Players .. .. .	129 to 131, 153, 206
Goldoni .. .. .	65
Goldsmith, Oliver .. .. .	94, 107, 153
Gollancz, Sir Israel .. .. .	97, 192
Gosson, Stephen .. .. .	18
Gough, Rev. Percival .. .. .	57
Granville-Barker, Harley .. .. .	3, 7, 49, 105, 111, 152, 160, 161, 179, 183, 194, 197
Graystone Place Training College .. .. .	97
Greene, Robert .. .. .	94
Greenleaf Theatre .. .. .	172
Greet, Ben .. .. .	153
Gregory, Lady .. .. .	136, 155
Gregson, J. R. .. .. .	53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 66, 164, 169, 186
Guildhall School of Music .. .. .	52, 122
Guildhouse, Eccleston Square .. .. .	122, 127

## H.

Hamilton, Miss Cicely .. .. .	55
Handel .. .. .	110
Hankin, St. John .. .. .	159
Hansford, Frederick E. .. .. .	132
Hardy Players .. .. .	131 to 134, 155
Hardy, Thomas .. .. .	131 to 133
Harvard University .. .. .	108
Harvey, Rupert .. .. .	29
Haworth, Dr. Peter .. .. .	216
Headlam, Rev. Stewart .. .. .	101
Heywood, Thomas .. .. .	96

## INDEX—continued.

	Pages
Hill Players .. .. .	131
Hill, Stanley .. .. .	29
Historical Exhibit of Theatre Art .. .	47, 214
H.M. King George V. .. .	195
Holcroft, Thomas .. .. .	20
Holst, Gustav .. .. .	177
Hope, Miss Helen .. .. .	70
Horniman, Miss .. .. .	27, 31, 46
Houghton, Stanley .. .. .	27, 159
Housman, Lawrence .. .. .	130
Huddersfield Thespians .. .. .	48, 53, 55, 165
Hughes, Richard .. .. .	137
Hull Little Theatre .. .. .	29

## I.

Ibsen .. .. .	22, 27, 58, 60, 87, 109, 155, 158
Independent Labour Party .. .. .	3
Institut Français du Royaume Uni .. .. .	188
International Congress of Dramatic and Lyric Art .. .. .	52
International Phonetic Society .. .. .	171
International Theatre Exhibition .. .. .	47

## J.

Jackson, Sir Barry .. .. .	6, 28, 49, 53, 154, 157, 158, 160, 162, 163
Jones, Henry Arthur .. .. .	96, 159
Jones, N. E. Field .. .. .	116
Jonson, Ben .. .. .	94, 95, 110
Jowett, Benjamin .. .. .	109

## K.

Kelly, Miss D .. .. .	146
Kelly, Miss M. E. .. .. .	146, 149
Kemble Shakespearean Company .. .. .	82
King George's Hall, Tottenham Court Road .. .. .	122
King, Mrs Godwin .. .. .	138, 142, 152, 183
King's College, Cambridge .. .. .	34
King's College, London .. .. .	104, 110
Kingsford, Rev. H. .. .. .	121
King's Weigh House Church .. .. .	125 to 127

## L.

Lancashire .. .. .	60 to 62
Lee, Sir Sidney .. .. .	97
Leeds Art Theatre .. .. .	24, 29, 53, 59, 121, 165
Leeds Civic Theatre .. .. .	55, 59, 165, 183
Leeds Industrial Theatre .. .. .	57 to 60, 117, 164, 165, 169
Leeds Music and Drama League .. .. .	31
Lena Ashwell Players .. .. .	3, 4, 24, 26, 36 to 41, 51, 201

## INDEX—continued.

	Pages.
Letchworth Settlement .. .. .	77, 78
Lewisham High Street Congregational Church .. ..	125
Lil's, George .. .. .	19, 158
Linley, Thomas .. .. .	21
"Little Theatres" .. .. .	52, 55, 56 to 70, 73, 75, 78, 79, 111, 112, 203, 204
Liverpool Playgoers .. .. .	30
Liverpool Playhouse .. .. .	4, 28
Liverpool University .. .. .	104, 105
Liverpool University Dramatic Society .. ..	110
Local Education Authorities .. .. .	95 to 103, 204, 205
London .. .. .	50 to 52
London Adult School Union .. .. .	85, 87
London County Council .. .. .	33, 37, 51, 95 to 102, 122, 205, 212
London Shakespeare League .. .. .	191
London University .. .. .	104, 105
Lry, John .. .. .	94
Lyons and Co., J .. .. .	115, 117

## M.

Maesterlinch .. .. .	53
Macnamara, Miss Margaret .. .. .	159
Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich .. .. .	24, 62 to 63, 152, 181, 184, 185, 191, 203
Manchester Playgoers .. .. .	30, 31, 62
Mander Brothers .. .. .	116, 117
Mansfield House Players .. .. .	50, 51
Mansfield House University Settlement .. ..	83, 84
Marlowe Society .. .. .	109, 110
Marple Gairick Society .. .. .	61
Martin, Mr. .. .. .	153
Mary Ward Dramatic Art Centre .. .. .	99 to 101, 103, 172, 187
Mary Ward Settlement .. .. .	80 to 83, 152
Masefield, John .. .. .	63, 131, 155
Maslington, Miss Dorothy .. .. .	114
Matthews, Professor .. .. .	107
Maugham, Somerset .. .. .	159
Mendelsohn .. .. .	90, 143
Mermaid Society .. .. .	110
Middletown Free Church .. .. .	127
Middlesex Local Education Authority .. ..	101
Miles, Napier .. .. .	131
Milne, A. A. .. .. .	54
Molière .. .. .	90, 94, 109, 110
Monck, Nugent .. .. .	6, 49, 53, 53, 65 to 68, 103, 181, 182, 183, 191
Morgan, Professor A. E. .. .. .	11, 23
Morley College, London .. .. .	32
Morris, Miss Margaret .. .. .	172
Municipal Theatre .. .. .	83, 193, 195, 196, 214
Murray, Professor Gilbert .. .. .	65, 83, 97, 104, 133, 149, 153
Mystical Players .. .. .	121

INDEX—*continued*.

Pages.

## N.

National Adult School Union .. ..	2, 84 to 88, 187, 207
National Federation of Women's Institutes ..	2, 149, 150, 207
National Operatic and Dramatic Association ..	2
National Theatre .. ..	21, 47, 192 to 196, 214
National Union of Teachers .. ..	136
Newbury Grammar School .. ..	104
Newcastle-upon-Tyne Repertory Company ..	29
New Scala Theatre, London .. ..	52
New Shakespeare Company .. ..	153, 191
New Theatre, London .. ..	122
Nicoll, Professor Allardyce .. ..	7, 11, 22, 94, 107, 158
Norwich Players .. ..	63
Nottingham Playgoers .. ..	30

## O

Ober Ammergau .. ..	138
Observer, The .. ..	4
Odion Theatre .. ..	193
"Old Vic," The .. ..	3, 24, 26, 31 to 36, 41, 51, 91, 97, 121, 122, 152, 157, 201
Omar, Miss Margaret .. ..	88
O'Neill, Eugene .. ..	111, 118
Oxford and Bermondsey Shakespeare Society ..	116
Oxford Players .. ..	1, 29, 108
Oxford University Dramatic Society .. ..	100, 185
Oxford University Extension Lectures Committee ..	4
Oxfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes ..	150
Oxford and Lymington Players .. ..	67, 102, 158

## P.

Pageants of Local History .. ..	150
"Pagiante," The .. ..	122
Pasadena Community Playhouse .. ..	112
Patent Theatres .. ..	20, 21
Pepys, Samuel .. ..	10
Percy, Lord Eustace .. ..	46
Peverett, George .. ..	85
Pinero, Sir Arthur .. ..	155
Prandello, Luigi .. ..	100
Plaistow Red Triangle Club .. ..	86
Pinto .. ..	161
Plautus .. ..	94
Playgoers' Societies .. ..	30, 31, 202

## PLAYS—

Abraham Lincoln .. ..	25, 65, 91, 157
Adling Machine, The .. ..	33, 55, 59
Alcestis .. ..	65, 152
Alkestis (Houshton) .. ..	150

## INDEX—continued.

Pages.

## PLAYS—continued.

Androcles and the Lion	..	..	..	..	52, 54, 66
Andromache	..	..	..	..	83, 152, 163
An Enemy of the People	..	..	..	..	30
Ann	..	..	..	..	39
Antigone	..	..	..	..	152
Arms and the Man	..	..	..	..	43, 83
Arthur	..	..	..	..	33
As You Like It	..	..	..	..	39, 84, 113, 140, 144
Back to Methuselah	..	..	..	..	27, 30, 52
Bathroom Door, The	..	..	..	..	39
Bear, The	..	..	..	..	110
Beggar Prince, The	..	..	..	..	39
Belinda	..	..	..	..	39
Bethlehem	..	..	..	..	130
Bill of Divorcement, The	..	..	..	..	39
Birth of Arthur, The	..	..	..	..	129, 130
Bosun's Mate, The	..	..	..	..	58, 84
Brave and the Fair, The	..	..	..	..	39
Caesar and Cleopatra	..	..	..	..	53
Campbell of Kilmore	..	..	..	..	43
Candida	..	..	..	..	38, 39, 145, 170
Caroline	..	..	..	..	39
Case of Lady Camber, The	..	..	..	..	40
Caste	..	..	..	..	39
Celluloid Cat, The	..	..	..	..	40
Chester Nativity Play	..	..	..	..	33, 97
Child in Flanders, The	..	..	..	..	39
Christmas Carol, A	..	..	..	..	40
Christmas Mystery Play	..	..	..	..	121
Cloudbreak	..	..	..	..	137
Conscious Lovers, The	..	..	..	..	158
Cophetua	..	..	..	..	131
Country Wife, The	..	..	..	..	39
Cousin Kate	..	..	..	..	40
Coventry Nativity Play	..	..	..	..	110, 130
Critic, The	..	..	..	..	64
Darkness and Light	..	..	..	..	125
Desperate Remedy, A	..	..	..	..	132
Devil's Disciple, The	..	..	..	..	39
Diana of Dobsons	..	..	..	..	39, 58
Dido and Aeneas	..	..	..	..	78
Diplomacy	..	..	..	..	40
Distracted Preacher, The	..	..	..	..	132, 133
Doll's House, The	..	..	..	..	39, 58
Doormats	..	..	..	..	40
Dover Road, The	..	..	..	..	54
Duchess of Malfi, The	..	..	..	..	53, 110
Diocenna, The	..	..	..	..	21

## INDEX—continued.

Pages.

## PLAYS—continued.

Duke of Killiecrankie, The .. .. .	40
Dumb Wife, The .. .. .	84
Dynasts, The .. .. .	109, 132, 133
Eager Heart .. .. .	121
Easiest Way, The .. .. .	40
East Lynne .. .. .	145
Elder Miss Blossom, The .. .. .	40
Electra .. .. .	30, 65, 152
Emperor Jones, The .. .. .	118
Everyman .. .. .	30, 31, 33, 35, 39, 40, 42, 53, 62, 121, 122, 125, 130, 170
Faëry Queen .. .. .	110
Falstaff, the Bouncing Knight, from Henry IV .. .. .	19
Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall, The .. .. .	130, 131
Fanny's First Play .. .. .	39
Forest, The .. .. .	118
Gay Lord Quex, The .. .. .	40
Gentleman Dancing Master, The .. .. .	65
George Barnwell .. .. .	20, 158
Getting Married .. .. .	40
Grave-digger's colloquy from Hamlet, The .. .. .	18
Great World Theatre, The .. .. .	29, 53, 121
Hamlet .. .. .	32, 64, 116, 118
Heartbreak House .. .. .	52
Henry IV, Part I .. .. .	109
Henry IV (Pirandello) .. .. .	109
Hercules Furens .. .. .	13
Hippolytus .. .. .	65, 139, 152
His Excellency the Governor .. .. .	39
His House in Order .. .. .	30
Hobson's Choice .. .. .	39
Immortal Hour, The .. .. .	28, 81, 129, 130
Importance of Being Earnest, The .. .. .	40, 42
Iphigenia in Tauris .. .. .	139, 140
Iron Chest, The .. .. .	158
Ithar .. .. .	126
Jacob and Esau .. .. .	97
Jew of Malta, The .. .. .	16
John Gabriel Borkman .. .. .	53
John Gloyd's Honour .. .. .	40
Jugurth .. .. .	16
Julius Caesar .. .. .	55, 69
Justice .. .. .	61
King Lear .. .. .	66
King Lear's Wife .. .. .	31
King's Jury .. .. .	75
Kynges Johan .. .. .	13

## INDEX—continued.

Pages.

## PLAYS—continued.

Pageant of Old Leicester	..	..	..	..	..	86
Pair of Spectacles, A	..	..	..	..	..	39
Panic, The	..	..	..	..	..	150
Paolo and Francesca	..	..	..	..	..	40
Passers By	..	..	..	..	..	39
Paul and Silas	..	..	..	..	..	123
Peer Gynt	..	..	..	..	53, 58, 78,	109
Philip the King..	..	..	..	..	..	53
Pillars of Society, The..	..	..	..	..	..	30
Poacher, The	..	..	..	..	..	137
Pretenders, The	..	..	..	..	..	109
Proposal, The	..	..	..	..	..	84
Prunella	..	..	..	..	..	40, 42
Purse Strings, The	..	..	..	..	..	39
Pygmalion	..	..	..	..	..	39
Ralph Roister Doister..	..	..	..	..	..97,	154
Return of the Native, The	..	..	..	..	..	132
Rhys Lewis	..	..	..	..	..	135
Riders to the Sea	..	..	..	..	..	43
Rivals, The	..	..	..	..	33, 40, 42,	86
Road to Ruin, The	..	..	..	..	..	20
Romance Jocosio	..	..	..	..	..	44
Romantic Young Lady, The	..	..	..	..	..	39
Romeo and Juliet	..	..	..	..	..	60
Round Table, The	..	..	..	..	..	130
R.U.R.	..	..	..	..	..	55, 78
Rutherford and Son	..	..	..	..	..	40
St. Bride	..	..	..	..	..	126
St. Francis and the Christmas Crab	..	..	..	..	..	126
St. Joan..	..	..	..	..	..81,	146
St. Valentine's Day	..	..	..	..	..	44
Samson Agonistes	..	..	..	..	..	30
School for Scandal, The	..	..	..	..	33, 39, 64, 86,	163
Semele	..	..	..	..	..	110
She Stoops to Conquer	..	..	..	..	33, 39,	150
Shoemaker's Holiday, The	..	..	..	..	14,	154
Shortage..	..	..	..	..	..	40
Skin Game, The	..	..	..	..	..	39
Smith	..	..	..	..	..	40
Story of the Nativity	..	..	..	..	..	125
Strife	..	..	..	..	..	83
Sumida River	..	..	..	..	..	130
Sweet Lavender	..	..	..	..	..40,	158
Tamerlane	..	..	..	..	..	16
Taming of the Shrew, The	..	..	..	..	..39,	112
Tess of the D'Urbervilles	..	..	..	..	..	132
Thief, The	..	..	..	..	..	40
Three Wayfarers, The	..	..	..	..	..	132



INDEX—*continued*.

Pages.

## S.

Sackville, Lady Margaret	..	..	..	..	..	71
Sadlers' Wells Theatre	..	..	..	..	..	35
St. Edward's Church, Holbeck, Leeds	..	..	..	..	..	53
St. Mary's, Graham Street, London	..	..	..	..	33, 121	
St. Mary's Settlement, York	..	..	..	..	77, 78	
St. Pancras People's Theatre	..	..	..	..	82	
St. Paul's, Covent Garden	..	..	..	..	121, 124, 127	
St. Silas the Martyr, Kentish Town	..	..	..	..	123	
Schools	..	..	..	..	103, 104	
Scott, Miss Maude	..	..	..	..	100, 101	
Scottish Association of Verse Speakers.	..	..	..	..	171	
Shadwell, Thomas	..	..	..	..	94	
Shakespeare, William	8	17, 21, 27, 31 to 34, 38, 39, 42, 43, 51, 57, 58, 60, 64, 65, 71, 75, 78, 82, 83, 87, 91, 94, 95, 97, 99, 104, 109, 113, 116, 119, 120, 131, 133, 139, 140, 142, 144, 145, 150, 153, 154, 157, 158, 172, 173, 191, 192, 194, 195, 202, 209	..	..	..	
Shakespeare Association	..	..	..	..	192	
Shakespeare Day Committee	..	..	..	..	192	
Shakespeare Memorial Committee	..	..	..	..	192, 193	
Sharp, Cecil	..	..	..	..	174, 176, 177, 179, 180	
Shaw, G. Bernard..	83, 84, 88, 94, 110, 130, 145, 155, 158, 163	22, 27, 38, 39, 58, 60, 64, 65, 75, 83, 84, 88, 94, 110, 130, 145, 155, 158, 163	..	..	..	
Sheffield Educational Settlement	..	..	..	..	53, 77, 78, 152	
Sheffield Playgoers	..	..	..	..	30, 52	
Sheffield Repertory Theatre	..	..	..	..	53	
Sheffield University Dramatic Society	..	..	..	..	110	
Sheridan, R. B.	..	27, 37, 60, 64, 65, 71, 88, 94, 107, 133, 154, 158, 207	..	..	68	
Shoreditch Drama Society	..	..	..	..	142 to 145	
Shoreham Village Players	..	..	..	..	15	
Sidney, Sir Philip	..	..	..	..	7, 131, 160, 172	
Smedley, Miss Constance	..	..	..	..	111	
Smith College	..	..	..	..	59	
Smith, C. F.	..	..	..	..	104, 152	
Smith, Sharwood	..	..	..	..	58	
Smyth, Ethel	..	..	..	..	91	
Sophocles	..	..	..	..	121	
Southwark Cathedral	..	..	..	..	158	
Steele, Sir Richard	..	..	..	..	60, 68, 156, 165	
Stockport Garrick Society	..	..	..	..	137 to 142, 152, 181	
Stoneland Players	..	..	..	..	123	
Storrs, Sir Ronald	..	..	..	..	122	
Strand Theatre	..	..	..	..	58	
Strindberg	..	..	..	..	135	
Swansea Cymmrodorion	..	..	..	..	135, 137, 145, 155, 159	
Synge, J. M.	..	..	..	..		

INDEX—*continued*.

Pages.

## T.

Tagore, Rabindranath .. .. .	130
Tchekov .. .. .	84, 110
Telegraph, Daily .. .. .	48
Terence .. .. .	94
Theatre Royal, Huddersfield .. .. .	55
Thorndike, Miss Sybil .. .. .	33, 97, 114, 152
Tilley, T. H. .. .. .	131
Times, The .. .. .	72
Tolstoi .. .. .	84, 158

## U.

Un-named Society .. .. .	31, 60 to 62, 129, 154, 155
Universities .. .. .	104 to 112, 206
University College of the South West of England .. .. .	110
University College, London .. .. .	110
University Extension Movement .. .. .	93, to 95, 138, 204
University of London Diploma in Dramatic Art .. .. .	102, 103, 105, 106 187, 207, 213

## V.

Victoria and Albert Museum .. .. .	47, 196
Vieux Colombier Theatre .. .. .	63, 188
Village Drama Society .. .. .	2, 137, 146 to 149, 151

## W.

Wareing, Alfred .. .. .	55
Webster, John .. .. .	110
Welsh Drama .. .. .	134 to 137, 149
Weym Garden City .. .. .	3
West End Adult School, Leicester .. .. .	86
West Hothly, Sussex .. .. .	137
West Kent Federation of Women's Institutes .. .. .	150
West, Miss Marjorie .. .. .	6, 17, 90, 91, 93, 152
Wheeler, Mrs. Penelope .. .. .	31
Whittingham, The Rev. G. Napier .. .. .	123
Whitworth, Geoffrey .. .. .	4, 46, 142, 194
Williams, Dr. Vaughan .. .. .	176
Wiltshire Federation of Women's Institutes .. .. .	150
Women's Institutes .. .. .	2, 141, 149, 150
Workers' Educational Association .. .. .	73, 89 to 93, 96, 201
Works and O.E.C.s .. .. .	116 to 120
World Association for Adult Education .. .. .	157
Wycheley, William .. .. .	65, 94

## Y.

Yale University .. .. .	108
Yarde, Miss Margaret .. .. .	114
Yeats, W. B. .. .. .	65, 130, 136, 155
York Everyman Theatre .. .. .	53, 55, 59, 165
Yorkshire .. .. .	52 to 60
Young Men's Christian Association .. .. .	2, 88